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BOSTON

WHEN I WAS A BOY IN INDIA

BY
SATYANANDA ROY

ILLUSTRATED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS



BOSTON
LOTHROP, LEE & SHEPARD CO.

1923

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When I Was a Boy In India

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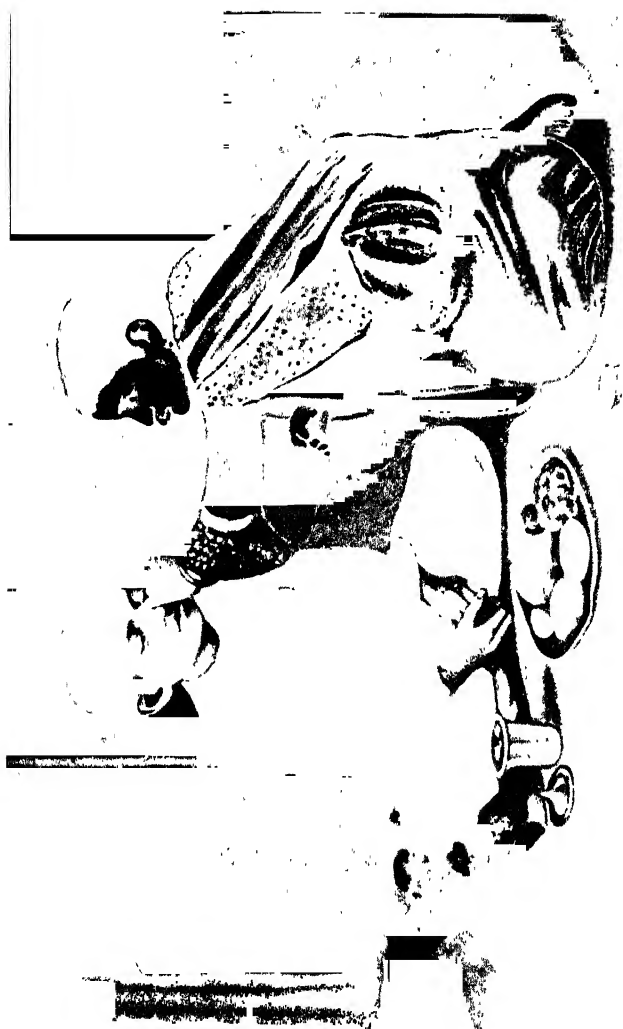
PREFACE

BORN on the eve of the Bhrātridwitiyā, the brother's festival, according to the Hindu calendar, I have felt more and more my indebtedness to my sisters. The passing of years, instead of defacing that sense, has intensified it to such a degree that I can realize the beauty and the utility of such a festival. On this occasion, it is said that Yama, the Lord of Death, takes a vacation that he may accept his sister Jamuna's invitation to a feast. So, following her example, every sister in our Hindu homes observes a beautiful practice. She puts with the tip of her finger a small piece of sandal-wood paste on her brother's forehead. Along with it she breathes a prayer: "As Yama, the Lord of Death, is deathless, so may my brother, also, be deathless!" She blows

the conch shell, the herald of auspicious moments. In case the brother is absent in a different part of the country, she puts on the wall a mark, intended for the brother.

If the brother is younger than his sister, he makes his *pronām* (touching the feet with one hand and placing it on his head). If he is the elder, the sister, in the same way, salutes him. She makes gifts of food, spices, and clothing. This simple but impressive ceremony is performed year after year in the homes of India. Such a ceremony marks the intensity of relationship between brothers and sisters in Hindu homes.

Several centuries ago a Hindu princess (of Rajputānā in central India) sent a silken cord to the then Mohammedan emperor at Delhi, Sultān Bābar. She was in great danger, and in the absence of a brother needed a brother's help very badly. That *rākhi* (the silken cord), symbolic of respect and affection between



brothers and sisters, was mightier than peace and good-will established between rival houses even by the sword and the loss of many lives. The Mohammedan prince, upon learning the meaning of the silken cord, responded immediately to the call for help from a Hindu sister—a sister by adoption. He did not shrink from helping her because of her difference in birth, language, and religion. Above all else was the appeal of brotherliness, of sisterliness. Therein lies the hope of the new and greater India that is to be—the India of the boys and girls of to-day and to-morrow.

These two beautiful customs, representative of real India, have inspired me in the preparation of the following chapters on my boyhood days in India. The experiences related here are all true. India is such a vast country that manners and customs prevailing in certain parts may not be the same as those in other sections. Notwithstanding the great difference in

customs and manners usually ascribed to life in India, there has been an underlying unity through all her history. It is extremely hard for any outsider to observe and appreciate that unity, which is real indeed. I have left many things unsaid. I have no intention of evading them. Limits of space stand in the way. I have tried to tell the facts without distorting my vision by looking through cheap colored glasses.

I express my indebtedness to my friends, Mr. David M. Cheney, of the faculty of Tufts College, and Reverend Arthur T. Brown, for their valuable help, suggestions, and criticisms.

SATYANANDA ROY.

Boston, September, 1923.

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WHEN I WAS A BOY IN INDIA

CHAPTER I

THE BIRTH OF A HINDU CHILD

“Do the Hindus throw their babies into the Ganges?”

The question was put to me, several years ago, by a group of school-children when I was walking through a street of a small Pennsylvania town. The same question has been asked again and again, not only by little children, but also by grown folk, who would have been surprised and shocked had I, in turn, asked of them a question as sensible: “Do Indians still scalp palefaces in Pennsylvania woods?” In every case my answer to

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such a question, of course, has been in the negative.

The burning of child widows (Sati or Suttee) on the funeral pyre of their husbands and the throwing of babies into the Ganges are pictures taken from the pages of the past history of India. We, in India, do not hear of such incidents as often as the children and the older people do in the United States of America. I lived to manhood in my country before coming to the States; and since my arrival in this country I have kept in constant touch with the course of events in India. Never have I heard of babies having been thrown into the Ganges in recent times.

My father and mother were born and brought up in orthodox Hindu homes. I was born in the outskirts of the city of Calcutta, the largest city in India, with a population above one million.

Calcutta is so often described by English writers as "the city of palaces," that

one is likely to paint an extremely highly colored picture of its wealth and magnificence. The district in which I was born had very few palatial buildings. We had an ancestral home of over one hundred years in another part of the city. That quarter still has a number of commodious houses owned by rich men. Most of them are big landholders, owning extensive properties in parts of India.

Shortly after my birth, my parents removed to the old house which was near the river Ganges. People in India like to live in the neighborhood of the Ganges and other sacred rivers.¹ In Hindu houses the water of the Ganges is sprinkled several times during the day for purifying purposes. Such water is stored especially in earthen or brass jars. A bath in the Ganges is supposed to wash away one's sins. People rise from their beds in the early hours of the morning, four o'clock

¹ The Ganges, the Jumnā, the Godāveri, the Kāveri, etc.

and after, so that they may proceed toward the river for their early morning bath or ablution. Some of them sing or repeat the different names of gods (with all attributes) on their way to the *ghāts*—the bathing-steps. The river Ganges which rises from the Himālaya Mountains flows into the Bay of Bengal about seventy miles down from Calcutta. The part of the river which flows by Calcutta is also called the “Hooghly” by the English, and at the same time known to the Hindus as the “Bhagirathi.”

Every Hindu child learns from the lips of elders a story about the rise of the Ganges. Once upon a time, King Sagar was ruling Aryābarta (the land of the Aryans).¹ He had sixty thousand sons. They disturbed the peace of mind enjoyed by one of the great *rishis* (sages) who had divine powers. The *rishi* was so disturbed that by the exercise of his powers he reduced to ashes those sixty thousand sons

¹ Ancient name of northern India.

of King Sagar. Nothing could be done to save them from the *rishi's* wrath. Bhagiratha, a member of the family, discovered later that the king's sons could be brought back to life, if he could only succeed in persuading the god Siva to unloose Gangā (Ganges) from the coils of his hair. After many hardships and a long journey to the highest point of the Mt. Kailāsh (Himālayas)—the home of the god, Bhagiratha was permitted to bring Gangā down from the Himālayas. The sons of King Sagar came back to life when the lifegiving water of the river flowed over their ashes. Gangā (or the Ganges) became the saviour of the sinners. I liked to hear this story of the birth of the Ganges.

I was certainly not thrown into the Ganges as food for crocodiles. My three elder sisters were all living when I was born. I remember very well the days when my nephews and nieces were born. I can assure the readers that in no case

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was there ever the faintest idea of throwing these babies into the Ganges.

When babies are born in a Hindu household, their arrival is announced to the neighbors by the blowing of conch shells. Women and girls take special delight in acting as heralds for the family. The birth of a child is welcomed in every Hindu home in India. The joy of the parents, relatives, and friends knows no bounds when the baby is a boy.

Boys are more welcome than girls for several reasons. First of all, they help preserve the family name and prestige. There is a Hindu proverb: "As long as one lives, one can keep alive his father's name." For in India, if one's name is asked first by a stranger or an acquaintance, one can naturally anticipate the second question, and that is the name of the father. Such questions about one's name, caste, and father's name may be annoying in the West but they are very common in India. In the second place, boys are en-

titled to offer sacrifices to the spirits of the departed ancestors.¹ Finally, they stay with parents and support them in their old age. Several Hindus whom I know have expressed their surprise that in the United States some of the older people live in old people's homes while their sons, thus freed of caring for their aged parents, enjoy their own lives. Such arrangements are not possible in Hindu society.

A boy is preferred, too, because he does not get married so early as a girl, who leaves for her husband's home a year after their marriage. Moreover, the boys of certain communities receive a dowry when they marry, and thereby add to the family treasury. The boys are, therefore, looked upon by some as assets, or investments, and the girls as liabilities. Girls leave their parental homes at a comparatively early age—between twelve and sixteen years. Marriage is obligatory in case of

¹ Such sacrifices are not animal sacrifices, but offerings of Pinda, or rice for the dead.

girls in orthodox Hindu society. Some of them help in draining off a considerable part of the family savings which goes to provide the dowry and other expenses for the wedding.

Fortunately, I was born in a family which did not follow the rules of the orthodox Hindu society. My parents belonged to very well-known aristocratic families in one part of India. Several of my great-grandfathers on my father's side were professors, poets, and physicians, and on my mother's side I had equally well-known ancestors, my grandfather being the last of the Dewāns of the Bank of Bengal—a position of trust and responsibility, similar to that of the secretary-treasurer of any bank in the West. My parents belonged to the Vaidya caste. In our part of India the Vaidyas are entitled to wear the sacred thread (*yajnapāvit*) or sacrificial cord as the mark or insignia of second birth or initiation. In Bengal the rank of the Vaidyas is next to the Brahmins, who also

wear the sacred thread. It is usually spun by Hindu widows on their spinning-wheels. The widows sell the thread and make some money to meet their expenses.

One of my mother's cousins was the world-famous leader of India in the last century—Keshub Chunder Sen, about whose wonderful power of speech it was said, "When Keshub speaks the world hears." After the death of Keshub Chunder Sen in 1884, my father joined the progressive religious movement known as the Brāhmo Somāj which Keshub Chunder Sen led while he was living. It will be of interest to note that a very well organized meeting was held in Boston in Tremont Temple to express sorrow at the death of the distinguished Hindu on the banks of the Ganges.

My father after joining the Brāhmo Somāj renounced all privileges pertaining to the society of High Caste Hindus especially the *dwijas* or twice-born. This meant not only the giving up of the sacred

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thread, but non-recognition of any caste distinction in matters of eating, marrying, etc. My uncle (Father's elder brother) used to wear the sacred thread. It consisted of a bunch of skeins of white thread about thirty-six inches long. The cord is hung around either the left shoulder or the neck.

Hindu society is based on an original fourfold division, according to the four main occupations of life: the priest and scholar; the warrior or soldier; the farmer and merchant; and, last of all, the laborer. In the course of time, this division became very rigid and gave rise to other divisions and subdivisions which were recognized as new castes. In the worst days of Indian history, intermarriage, interdining, and other forms of social intercourse were prohibited by the lawmakers, and Hindu society became divided into separate groups. Every profession became a caste, and a man born in a certain caste remained within it unless made an outcaste by the

decision of his group. Blacksmith, carpenter, builder, shoemaker, weaver, potter, fisherman, etc., each belonged to the particular profession—the caste. It is to be remembered that caste rules were not so rigid in the beginning as in the latter days.

The house where I was born was a small rented structure built of bricks and mortar with cemented floor, plastered (sand and lime) walls, and flat tiled roof. The insides of the rooms were painted white. I had occasion to visit this house when I was older. I love to remember my birthplace as well as the house where I spent most of my young days. Later, when at school, I read Thomas Hood's poem, "I remember, I remember." It produced such a thrill that I had very little difficulty in memorizing it, with its opening lines:

" I remember, I remember
The house where I was born,
The little window where the sun
Came peeping in at morn."

At the time of my birth our family was somewhat isolated from our orthodox Hindu friends and relatives. Consequently when I was a few days old the social and religious practices which are usually performed at the birth of a child were not observed. I remember my mother telling me one of the practices so common on the sixth day after a baby is born in a Hindu house. An inkpot and a pen are left at night on the threshold of the room where the baby and its mother sleep. It is believed that the Vidhātā Purusha (or the Great Dispenser of Events) visits the child at dead of night and writes the child's future on its forehead.

There are special celebrations on the sixth and the eighth days. Sasthi, the goddess of children, is worshipped on the sixth day, which is followed by another celebration on the eighth day. The goddess is represented as a yellow-complexioned woman with a child in her arms, riding on

a cat. No Hindu woman, therefore, dares to injure a cat. Well-to-do families send presents to their friends and relations at the end of the week. The gifts are distributed in small baskets which contain puffed rice, sweetened flattened rice, dried puffed peas, sweets, etc., and a few pieces of silver or copper coins (*paishā*—one-half cent). I remember in my childhood whenever such presents came to our home, I waited anxiously for the few coppers, which my mother always divided equally among her children. My mother never showed any partiality to me—the youngest child in the family. The copper coins (*paishās*) as a rule, looked very bright, for they were all fresh from the mint. Sometimes children from the neighborhood, as well as children of friends and relatives, are invited to see the newly-born babe. They come, sing and dance round the room, and are treated to different kinds of sweets and fruits. At the end of the program they return home perfectly

happy and contented, especially when they receive a few copper coins or a small silver coin of the value of four cents.

Every new-born baby in a Hindu family has a wonderful earning capacity. Of course, there is no show window in the home. The people in India have never heard of the baby shows so characteristic in certain cities of the United States. Still a baby is exhibited to visitors and it earns some money in the course of a few weeks. Whenever a relative or friend wants to see the child for the first time, he presents something to the baby in coin or in kind. It varies from a silver *rupee* (about thirty-two cents) to a gold piece equivalent to an English sovereign (about five dollars). This collection of presents is usually kept in charge of the mother who buys some necessary articles of dress, ornaments, or toys for the child when it grows a few months older. The money is even deposited in postal savings banks by some parents. Banks are few and far be-

tween in India, but every post-office has its savings department.

The vast majority of the people, being farmers of quite limited means, are very poor. Some do not even have two square meals a day. The only meal that they can afford consists of a few handfuls of cooked rice, one or two vegetables, and a little salt. Such people cannot exchange presents or entertain friends even on such happy occasions as the birth of a baby or a marriage. Their lot is really very hard. I am familiar with their conditions from my personal observations of the poor people among whom I worked for several years before I came to the United States.

The most important ceremony in the life of a child is the *annaprāshan* (rice-taking) or *nāmakaran* (name-giving) when rice is formally set before the child as food. In some families the child is not allowed to swallow a single grain of rice until this rite is administered by the priests. Other families simply make it a formal affair.

Calcutta is a great pilgrim center. The temple of the goddess Kālī—the mother goddess representing force and energy—is located in the southern part of the city. To this temple parents take their children to perform the necessary *pūjā* (devotional worship) before they administer the rice. I know I did not have to go through such a ceremony at any temple. My mother told me that, instead of that, we had a service of worship in our house, conducted by one of the well-known ministers of the Brāhmo Somāj, Reverend Bhāi Upād-hāya Gourgovinda Roy. A large number of friends were invited on the occasion. At the end of the service (which consisted of singing of hymns, reading of scriptures of different religions, prayers, etc.), the minister announced my name.

As a rule, two names are given to a child. One is the formal name and the other is the informal. Sometimes one of the names is determined by the star under which one is born. I have only one name,

Satyananda. It means truth and joy. (Satya and Ananda), or, if I want to make any meaning out of it, it may even mean one who rejoices in truth or one who is the joy of the pure. The first part of my name is similar to the Christian name of the West. My last name, Roy, which is also spelled as Rāi, Rāy, and Rāya, is not a family name. Our family name is Dās Gupta, which indicates our caste. The Mohammedans, while they ruled in India, recognized no caste. They conferred titles of honor on those who served the government. Probably some one of my ancestors received the title Roy from one such ruler. In the course of time the title became hereditary.

The Hindus usually name their children after the names of their gods and goddesses. There is a popular saying that there are three hundred and thirty millions of gods and goddesses.¹ In recent times

¹ The total population of India (including Burma) is 313,470,014.

parents have been giving different kinds of names to their children. They are more poetic and abstract. But in the days of our mothers and grandmothers such names could be found only here and there. For example: my mother and her younger sister have two different names of the same goddess. My mother's name was Annapurnā (one who fills with food) ; this goddess is represented in Hindu mythology as a fair woman who stands on a lotus with a rice-bowl in one hand, a spoon in the other. She is the guardian deity of many Hindu homes. My aunt's name is Giribālā or the daughter of the mountains. Both Annapurnā and Giribālā are names of the goddess Sati, Gouri, or Pārbati, the wife of Shiva.

Sometimes converts to Christianity adopt a Christian name such as John Bose, or Alfred Nundy, but one very seldom will notice any convert from the higher castes who has changed his name entirely, while among converts from the lower

castes and aboriginal tribes of India there are some who have changed their names completely. Their names may not sound at all unfamiliar to Western ears,—Samson, Simon, Peter, Jacob, Edward, Ethel, Gertrude, etc. In the case of both boys and girls, sometimes the designation servant or maid of god or goddess is added to a name,—Hari, meaning God; Haridās, meaning servant of the god Hari; Haridāsi, meaning maid of the god Hari. The idea has been carried forward to the Indian Christian community. I have a friend whose name is Jesudās or Servant of Jesus.

One may naturally ask why the Hindu children are named after the gods and goddesses. The reason is found in the following story of Ajāmil and how he went to Baikuntha (the heaven of the god Vishnu). Ajāmil was a great sinner who lived in ancient times. His wickedness even made the earth feel the burden heavier. He forgot all about gods and

worship, so deeply absorbed in his various evil deeds was he. But he had named his son Vishnu after the name of the great god of protection. When the earth grew weary of carrying the burden of such a wicked one, Yama, the Lord of Death, decided to visit him. Ajāmil was lying on his death-bed without feeling the least bit of shame for his evil deeds. He did not repent. The Lord of Death with his attendants came to take him away. Ajāmil was so frightened when he saw him that he made a last effort to call his son by name—Vishnu. The sound penetrated through the walls of heaven and the great god Vishnu felt restless. He came down to claim the worst sinner who had called him in his last moments. Death and his terrible attendants had to depart at the approach of the Lord of Life. It was by a mere chance that Ajāmil was saved. Repetition of the names of gods and goddesses (one hundred eight, one thousand or more times) during the day is one of

the duties of the Hindus. Here is a way for a Hindu to repeat the name of a god or goddess as many times as he calls his sons or daughters, who bear the names of gods and goddesses. Beads of rosary are used by Hindu householders (especially in the evening) as help in counting the names of gods. Pious people may be seen carrying the rosary in a small bag made of cotton or plush.

CHAPTER II

CHILDHOOD DAYS

IN the course of the first few weeks after my birth there was a fire in the room late at night. My mother, myself, and a nurse were all sleeping. It was during the winter months in Calcutta when evenings were rather cold and mornings were very foggy. The nurse built a fire in an open fireplace in the form of an earthen bowl. Her clothes caught fire from the flames in the bowl. Had it not been for the courage of my father, who was awakened from his sleep by the shrieking of the nurse, we three would have perished in the flames, or been badly burnt and disfigured. My father, with the cool courage which characterized him always, managed to put out the fire. The majority of the so-called nurses of fifteen or twenty years ago were

very ignorant. They are so even now; but it is a hopeful sign of the times that their quality is improving. Not only are the nurses better trained, but every year India is graduating a number of women doctors from the different medical schools and colleges.

My father was a very good-looking man with a fair complexion. My mother told me that when I was born I had a very good complexion. One of my father's friends remarked in those days that I looked more like a European than a Hindu. We have in India people of all shades of complexion, corresponding to the blonds and brunettes of the West, as well as the yellow and the brown, characteristic of the East. Many people in the West, and especially in the United States, have the wrong impression that all Hindus are either brown, yellow, or black. They are not.

Many were the stories of his school days which my father told me in the early days

of my childhood. He was a very well-built man and attended regularly a gymnasium for physical culture. Though himself a product of the gymnasium, I remember very well he did not like my idea of joining it. When I was a little older I listened with rapt attention to everything my father said about the schooling he had received through the different grades. The lowest school was the *pāthshālā* (or the house of reading lessons). The beginnings of a child's education in his days were made with the writing on the cemented floor, first with a kind of white paint and then with a heavy pencil chalk, which looked more like a stick of stone. The next step was writing on plantain or banana leaves with reed pen and ink. Steel pens were strictly prohibited for beginners. When I was five and a half years old, I began writing on the floor with the chalk stick. My next step was writing on the slate. But in my father's day, when a scholar became

proficient in the art of writing on banana leaves, he was promoted to the next higher class, where he could write on dried palm leaves. Many ancient manuscripts of India were written on such leaves. Between the stage of writing on palm leaves and paper there was the slate. I remember I made little use of the slate in my school days. When I began to write on paper, I used first the reed pen and afterward the quill. The steel pen came last of all.

My father always tried to impress on me the value of knowledge. One of his classmates, he told me, committed to memory the whole of Dr. Johnson's English Dictionary. Another used to study late at night in the streets of Calcutta under the street lamps,—and in those days we had kerosene lamps for lighting the streets. One of these boys became in later life a doctor, and the other, a lawyer.

My father, in his school days, bought a copy of the Mahābhārata—the great In-

dian national Saga. It was a translation into Bengali (my language) from the classical Sanskrit. My father told me that he had saved the little money which he used to receive from my grandfather for school lunches. He bought the book and had the parts bound out of his savings. The book, running through eighteen volumes, provided me enough reading during my school days. My second sister was a voracious reader and a good storyteller. She used to tell us many stories from the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata—the two outstanding educational agencies of India.

The Mahābhārata describes the story of two princely houses, the Kurus and the Pāndavas who descended from common ancestors. The blind king, Dhritrāshtra, had one hundred sons and his brother Pāndu had only five. On account of the blindness of Dhritrāshtra, Pāndu ruled the kingdom of Delhi. His eldest son Yudhishtir succeeded him; but the sons of



A SCENE FROM THE MAHABHARATA.

Shri Krishna in the Kaurava assembly on a peacemaking errand
from the Pandavas

Dhritrāshtra were so jealous that they sought every means to kill the five brothers who were well known for their honesty, bravery, and wisdom. They finally succeeded in banishing the five brothers and their wife Draupadi from their kingdom on account of their defeating them at a game of dice. The Pāndavas with Yudhishtir as their leader always stood for truth, goodness, and justice; while the party of the Kurus, with Duryodhan at their head, stood for jealousy, hatred, and unrighteousness. At the end of their period of banishment the five brothers claimed their kingdom. The Kurus were reluctant to give up their claims. At the refusal of Duryodhan and his party (*i. e.*, the Kurus) to restore even that "part of the land which can be marked by a needle's point," war was declared in which Sri Krishna, the incarnation of God, sided with the Pāndavas, and, in the chariot of the third brother Arjuna, took part in the battle.

The Mahābhārata ends with the final overthrow of the Kurus, the party of unrighteousness. But the victory was very dearly bought. They could not enjoy the fruits of victory, because of the unholy methods of warfare they had to adopt to attain even a righteous end. They had to pay the price. Yudhishtir was transported into Heaven like Elijah of the Old Testament, and his brothers and wife died on their way to Heaven.

Such is, in brief, the story of the great Indian epic which, more than anything else, unites the people of India who belong to the Hindu society. It is a mine of anecdotes and stories of heroes and their relations with men and gods. The stories appealed to my boyish mind because of the daring and the goodness of some of their chief characters. I remember that I had very favored heroes—Arjuna and Bhishma—and sometimes, with friends, I used to create little plays in which we took the parts of their characters. To under-

stand India and the Hindus, the Mahābhārata must be studied, for we have a proverb: "What is not found in Mahābhārata cannot be found in India." A recent writer on Indian subjects has remarked:

"No great man could be made in India without its influence upon his childhood. And the hero-making poem is one throughout every province of the land."¹

When I was about two years old my parents removed to our ancestral home in one of the oldest districts of Calcutta. Its early name was Sutānuti and it formed the nucleus of the early settlement under the English East India Company. Modern Calcutta is an outgrowth of seven villages about one hundred and seventy years old. Besides the home in Calcutta we had another home in the country districts not very far from the city. The name of that place was Kānchanpalli or Kānchrāpārā,

¹ Noble, Margaret E. (Sister Nivedita)—"The Web of Indian Life."

meaning "Golden Village." I never returned to that place. The once prosperous village is now almost deserted; and, as I understand from the description given by some of my relations, most of its houses are in ruins. It is full of jungles and animals like jackals—and, occasionally, tigers prowl around.

The deserted condition of the villages is really appalling in our part of the land, notwithstanding our rich landholder class. One of the causes of the decay of the villages is the rapid progress of malaria in the country districts. Very little attempt has been made to combat malaria until recently. Poor people can hardly afford the luxury of having the mosquito netting or curtain, which encloses a bed. Such curtains, no doubt, keep off the mosquitoes; yet I remember at least one night in Howrah (on the opposite side of the river Ganges, near Calcutta) when, despite the curtain, I was kept awake all night by the terrible noise made by their swarm, at-

tempting to force their way through the netting. The majority of the men do not wear any clothing to cover the upper part of their bodies. The mosquito bites are very annoying.

The traveler who goes to Calcutta and wanders through the European district and the residential section for wealthy Indians, is not likely to meet the decay and the disintegration which characterize our villages. The business districts are crowded with motor-cars, trucks, taxicabs, and electric tram-cars. The hurry and bustle of modern city life has increased a hundredfold since my childhood. The days of slow street-cars drawn by horses and palanquins (*pālkis*) borne on the shoulders of four men have passed away. The tremendous amount of business carried on every day in the modern Indian city will give an inadequate idea of Indian life. The American tourists seldom visit the villages which even now supply most of our resources. No Indian,

therefore, can overlook the villages, however poor they may be. For nine-tenths of the population of India live in small, country settlements. There are about seven hundred thousand villages. The number of cities with a population of about one hundred thousand will not exceed thirty. Societies are rapidly springing up in India for the improvement of the villages.

Though I was born and brought up in a city, the second largest city in the British Empire, next to London, I never lost contact with village life. I heard stories of that life from my father, mother, and grandmother. I went to my mother's village home several times when I was a boy. Those were my first experiences of real village life. I liked the life with all its disadvantages. They used to drink water from the wells or ponds and filtered at home. My grandfather had a palatial building in the village of Gariffā, not far from the banks of the Ganges. He had



THE STATUE OF BUDDHA AT BUDDHAGAYA
The place where Buddha is said to have attained Nirvana.

extensive gardens with different kinds of fruit and flower trees. There were three large tanks near the house which belonged to my grandfather. The place looked very beautiful in summer with all the fruit-trees heavily laden with luscious fruits. Mangoes, peaches, lichis, jāms (jambolin), palms, guava, lemons, bananas, jackfruits, pineapples,—just to mention a few from the several gardens—added to our daily bill of fare.

My grandfather had six sons and two daughters. At certain intervals during the year all the sons with their families and the daughters would come and live in the same house with their parents. Besides there would be a few near relatives who did not have any homes. According to the customs of the Hindu Joint Family, there are homes which accommodate between forty and one hundred members. A college friend of mine in India once told me that in his home more than one hundred people (including servants) had

their meals twice daily. Certain homes in the country districts are like villages by themselves.

It is distressing for us to note the ruined state of our grandfathers' houses. Both my grandfathers' (paternal and maternal) native villages have grown since my childhood. Two important railway centers have opened their new workshops, and jute mills have been successfully plying their trade. But these inroads of modern machinery have not improved the health and sanitation of the people in the neighboring districts in a satisfactory way. In India modern machinery and improved health do not go hand in hand, as in many places in the United States.

Our house in Calcutta was a small two-storied building. Adjoining it there was another brick-built, one-storied house in which my uncle lived. He was my father's eldest brother and a medical practitioner (homeopathic) in those days. In my young days I watched him examine

patients and prescribe medicine. There was a room on the roof of his house which served as the family sanctuary from my grandfather's days. The sanctuary is the most holy place in a Hindu home. Everything is kept scrupulously clean there. My grandfather, a very devout man, and his six brothers set apart this room for the worship of the family god—Raghunāth, another name for Vishnu, the second member of the Hindu Trinity. On a small wooden platform at the center of the room there was a brass throne, a beautiful specimen of Indian brasswork. The symbol of the god in the shape of a small, but slightly flattened and irregularly shaped, black stone, formed the object of worship.¹ Though my father, because of his membership in the Brāhmo Samāj—the progressive religious movement of India which stood for harmony, unity, and uni-

¹ Symbols of gods and goddesses are usually made of stone or metals like brass, silver, and gold. Images are also made of the same substances, as well as clay and wood.

versality—did not approve of the worship of gods and goddesses, I had, in my boyhood, many chances of witnessing the orthodox forms of Hindu worship.

Our house had four rooms on the second story. Each room had two or three large windows, and was well lighted and ventilated. The shape of the house was rectangular. There was an open courtyard at the center. Most of the houses in our part of India have the open courtyards, though no space may intervene between two houses, and there may be no front yard. Between the courtyard and the rooms there was a veranda which enclosed the open space at the center of the house. Wood is used for the floors and inner walls of wooden and other houses. Their number is comparatively small in Calcutta, except in the poorer people's districts. After my arrival in the United States I sent a picture post-card to a friend. It had the picture of a building. On receipt of the card my friend wrote to

me that he did not know how the people in the States could live in such a box-like structure called a house, without having any open space in the middle in which to breathe.

My grandmother (Father's mother) used to live in one of the rooms on the second story. She was almost crippled on account of a chronic rheumatism from which she suffered for several years. She told me many stories about *dacoits* (armed burglars) who used to infest the country districts during her young days. One night the dacoits came to her ancestral village home and sought to break open the doors of the house. From fifty to seventy years ago, the country houses of the rich and well-to-do were provided with several sets of doors made of extra heavy wood. The stairs were built in such a way that before one could reach the last step leading to one floor he had to pass through several doors. Such doors were the marks of robber-proof houses. Every Hindu

house had its inner apartments where men, women, and children slept and deposited their valuables in secret vaults on the floor or in the walls of the bedrooms. My grandfather's house at Gariffā (or Gaurivā) had all those advantages. The "Chor Kuthir," or the hiding-place from the gaze of the thieves, was a small shelf (or closet) in an obscure corner of the room which the thieves were likely to leave unnoticed in their hurry. I remember, when I played the game of hide-and-seek, we would aim for that "Chor Kuthir."

Some of the dacoits were like the black-hands of America. They would inform their victims by mail as to the date and time of their visits. One of the famous dacoits, whose thrilling exploits resembled those of Robin Hood, was Viswanath or Vishu dacoit. His object was to rob Peter to pay Paul. There was another whose name was Raghu or Rogho dacoit. Some of the dacoits used big wooden legs called *ranpā*. They were experts in fly-

ing through the country with the help of those big sticks used as extended legs, or stilts.

On the particular night to which my grandmother referred, the dacoits came with lighted torches. They were all masked men who preferred to remain unknown. Some of them had their bodies painted, too. They carried spears, swords, shields, and big sticks. The terrible noise they made when they arrived before the house awakened the sleepers. The men in the house understood that noise immediately, and rushed for their spears. They stood at their posts behind several doors which had holes through which they could drive their spears in defence.

My grandmother was a clever woman. Her eldest child had a number of gold ornaments on his body. She took out every one of them, wrapped them up in a piece of cloth, and threw the bundle out of the window into the back yard. It fell in a dark spot which was full of trees and

shrubs. She knew very well that the dacoits would lay hands on everything that was valuable. Some of them, no doubt, treated women and children with consideration; but there were others who did not. In vain did the dacoits try to force their way into the house by breaking open the doors, but their attempts were repulsed by the skillful use of spears by the men on the inside who were defending the house.

The attack and the defence continued for several hours, until the cock crew and the faint glimmerings of dawn indicated the approach of the morning. Baffled in his attempt, the robber chief ordered retreat; for it was a custom with the dacoits to give up the attempt after the first cock had crowed. But the chief was sore at heart on account of the unexpected failure. He went back repeating the cry: "When I shall come back next time I shall play football with the head of the owner of this house."

The owner of the house was my great-grandfather.

Such stories of dacoits, thieves, and ghosts used to frighten me so much that I would sit shivering at the feet of the storyteller. The stories of ghosts with their many varieties would scare even grown-up people. My father said he did not believe in ghosts or spirits. That gave me some courage, but such stories as those of the *petni* (woman ghosts), *sāṅkchunni* (white-complexioned woman ghosts), *skandakātā* (headless ghosts), *Brahmadoitya* (Brāhmin Ghost), and *Māmdo* (Mohammedan Ghost), used to frighten me in dark places until my thirteenth year.¹ Besides these stories, my second sister had access to a wonderful collection from our epics, the *Rājasthān* (or the Deeds of the Heroes of Rajputānā), the *Purānas*

¹ In my uncle's house there was a wood-apple (*Acyle Marmelos*) tree. Some of my friends frightened me by telling stories about Brahmin's ghost who lived in that tree.

(popular scriptures) and the lives of the great teachers of all religions.

Grandparents are very much concerned about the welfare of their grandchildren. My grandmother was no exception to this rule. When I was very young, my position in the family was unique. My father had three brothers, but they had no sons. I was the only grandson my grandmother ever had. There is a story about my grandmother. Bless her heart!

Mango is considered to be the best fruit of our country. I do not know how to describe its taste. So far as my knowledge goes, it does not grow in any other part of the world. Only in recent years attempts have been made to grow mangoes in Florida and California. Mango has more than one hundred different varieties. During the mango season, *i. e.*, during the summer months, children do not like to eat anything else but mangoes, morning, noon, and night. Good mangoes (like Bombāi, Langrā, Fajli, Himsāgar,

Kishenbhog) have a very sweet taste similar to the taste which one may enjoy from a combination of apple, peach, and pineapple. The shape of the seed is flat and oval, and the color of the meat varies between various shades of yellow and red. The skin is either green or yellow with red spots. The best mangoes have a mealy taste, while the others, though very juicy, are fibrous. When green they are eaten with a pinch of salt added to each bite. In late spring and early summer, boys will be seen sitting on the branches of mango-trees with jack-knives taken out of their tucked-in waist pockets (when one does not wear anything else but a piece of cloth called *dhuti* or *dhoti*, a pocket is improvised near the waist by tucking in the cloth), cutting slices of mangoes and eating these with great relish.

I was, as a boy, never very fond of this fruit. My grandmother became a little worried. She advised my mother that she should at least persuade me to make a

gift of a mango to a Brahmin, a member of the highest caste. In her opinion, my lack of taste for mango surely could not be attributed to any other cause but one, that in my former birth I must have been a very stingy man, who loathed to present even a mango to a deserving Brahmin. That sin was haunting me in my subsequent (present) birth and I could counteract the effects of the sin (my lack of my taste for mango) only by performing the duty which I had neglected in my previous birth. The popular Hindu theory of births and rebirths seeks to explain many events in human life in this fashion. *Adrista* (that which is not seen, or destiny) or *Kapāl* (forehead)—these are very common expressions amongst Hindu families. Many a time I heard these words from my grandmother, aunt, and others.

When I recall my grandmother, I am reminded of a well-known Bengali proverb which mothers and grandmothers

often quoted: "Grandson's grandson in one's lifetime helps light a candle in heaven." I know very few grandparents have the privilege of meeting their grandchild's grandchild. For the average life of a man in India is only twenty-three years.

CHAPTER III

SCHOOL DAYS

MY father was educated in the famous missionary school and college in Calcutta established by the prince of Christian missionaries in India, Dr. Alexander Duff. The college bore his name during my father's days. At present the Scottish Churches' College includes the old institution founded by Dr. Duff. My father never became a convert to Christianity but was greatly influenced by the teachings of Jesus and the work of the progressive social and religious leaders of India like Debendranath Tagore (father of the poet Rabindranath Tagore) and Keshub Chunder Sen. My three sisters, who were all senior to me in age and schooling, attended the girls' schools conducted by the Brāhmo Somāj and the Church of Scotland.

Once my parents conceived the idea of inviting one of the visiting women teachers of the Scotch Mission into our home to teach us. So Mrs. B.—, one of the earliest women graduates of the University of Calcutta, became our teacher. At least in my own case she was the first teacher that I had. In Bengal, when the parents decide that their boys shall begin the life of a scholar they consult the Hindu almanac. It has a list of dates on which Hindus should begin. In my case, I remember very well that no such reference was made. My father and sisters had taught me the alphabets and how to write them on the floor and the slate. Unlike my father's schooling as regards writing, I skipped some of the steps. When I began writing on paper with pen and ink I felt as happy as a king.

I learned to count by means of copper coins and tamarind seeds which I kept in a cloth bag. When I was six and one-half years of age my mother insisted on

my admission into a school. At first my father was not very eager to send me to school, but yielded later to my mother's request. He took me to the same school in which he had been taught. The most elementary and cheapest schools in our part of India are known as *pāthshālās*. I never had the good, or the bad, fortune of receiving an education in a *pāthshālā*, though there was one almost opposite our home. In such schools lessons imparted in reading, writing, and arithmetic are very elementary in character. Learning by rote is very strictly enforced. The *pandit* (scholarly teacher; such name is a misnomer in this case) or *Guru Mohāshaya* (sir teacher) rules the school with his cane. There cannot be any case of "sparing the rod and spoiling the child" in most *pāthshālās*.

The school to which I was sent happened to be a government school (as opposed to the numerous private schools) and was of a better grade. The building

was unusually large, having been built by one of the millionaires of Calcutta as his residence. It was not suited for school purposes. My school hours were between ten-thirty in the morning and four in the afternoon. The *pāthshālās*, on the other hand, had morning and afternoon sessions. Many parents sent their children there to keep them out of mischief.

During my first few weeks, school life did not prove very interesting. The majority of the teachers were very old men. Most of my classmates, too, were older in age and in knowledge of the world outside of the home. So they treated me as a child. I had great difficulty in making friends. I was interested in my studies and made rapid progress in every subject except arithmetic. I shall never forget the face of the teacher who first taught me arithmetic. From the very beginning he began to box my ears, slap my face, and strike my back, if I made the slightest mistake in doing sums. That treatment by

Romanath Babu (as we called him) created in me a spirit of revolt—a repugnance for a subject which could not be taught without beating. I cherished the idea that if I ever came in charge of a school I would at least abolish the teaching of arithmetic (except the first four rules). In our *pāthshālās* and lower grades of elementary schools, scholars were required to chant or recite the multiplication table in a singsong voice; usually that part of the school routine came during the last period. Sometimes there were *sardār poros*, or class leaders, who began reciting. The rest of the class would follow the leader every time he stopped. Many a time the teacher would fall asleep listening to the wonderful music produced by his scholars.

There are schools for boys as well as for girls in India. But they are neither free nor compulsory (except in some of the Indian Princes' territories). The *pāthshālās* charge a very small monthly tuition for attendance, varying from eight to

thirty-two cents (two *annas* to one *rupee*). The vast majority of the Indian children do not have a chance to go inside a school. Their parents cannot afford to pay the tuition fee. Some of them cannot spare their children. In case they do, they deprive themselves of a little help which they receive from their children, while they are engaged in farming. In cities like Calcutta boys are apprenticed to workmen who teach them certain trades, *i. e.*, bricklaying, shoemaking, carpentry, street-cleaning, etc. Whatever they earn is added to the family treasury.

In the elementary schools boys and girls sometimes study in the same classes. But in the higher grades, above what we call the lower primary (corresponding to the American kindergarten) they go to different schools. There is no such system as co-education in the upper primary, middle, and high schools of India. In the girls' schools, the majority of the teachers are women and their number is increasing.

Boys in the higher grades are never taught by women, as in the United States. Besides the attempts made by the government to open schools, private agencies and societies have been busy all along in starting new schools and offering opportunities for education to those to whom it is denied because of poverty.

Besides these schools there are *tols* and *mukhtabs*, schools for imparting classical Sanskrit and Arabic and Persian languages and literature. These schools do not teach any English. My language, Bengali, is derived from Sanskrit. Our writing, like that of most of the European languages, reads from left to right, while Arabic and Persian, following the Semitic rule, read from right to left. Northern India had once great schools for classical learning. Scholars from different parts of Asia attended these schools and universities, some of which even accommodated several thousand students in their dormitories. Sanskrit is used by the priests and

Brahmin scholars. It is known as “the language of the gods.”

Between one-thirty and two in the afternoon, we enjoyed a short period of recess. I recall that we boys waited anxiously for the ringing of the one-thirty and four-o'clock bells. The afternoon recess period was called “tiffin,” an English word corresponding to “luncheon.” During my first four years of school, my mother made arrangements for sending my lunch at the “tiffin” period. We had a servant who not only attended me on my way to and from school, but brought my food as well. Servants are cheap in India. But they are becoming scarcer every day, which I consider a hopeful sign. Too many servants have the tendency to make the masters idle and domineering.

The students of Indian *pāṭhshālās* (elementary schools) carry their own seats along with their books and slates. The seats are rolled mats, three feet square. In our Calcutta school we had

benches without any backs; the classes were supplied with long tables or sloping desks; a desk and a chair for the teacher and a blackboard on a stand,—these were the only furniture. We had several playgrounds, one fitted with apparatus for physical exercise, which consisted of parallel bars, horizontal bar, swings, rings, ladder, dumb-bells, bar-bells, Indian clubs, trapeze, etc. Most of my schoolmates who loved to play came at least half an hour before the commencement of the first school period. That, as well as the “tiffin” period, was devoted to various kinds of games. Even during the hot summer months of April, May, and June, there was no cessation of these games. In consequence we always suffered from a terrible thirst. Whenever a student felt thirsty he could leave the class with the permission of the teacher. The usual form of request was made with folded palms, which signified an attitude of prayer. Some of the students, I remem-

ber, used to slip out of the class on pretext of getting a drink of water when they really wanted to evade reciting their lessons, as they had come to school unprepared. Indian schools do not have any drinking-fountains like those in America. The teachers do not help the pupils in the preparation of daily lessons, these being supposed to be done at home. Classes are not placed in charge of single teachers as in the United States. The Indian teachers teach subjects, not their pupils. That is a great defect. The pupils have to supply their own books and writing materials, the cost of which is an additional burden for poor people.

The teachers in Indian schools work at least four out of five periods every day. They are very poorly paid. In the cities, to add to their scanty source of income, they tutor students in private homes. In the country some of them take charge of the village post-offices. Some of my teachers used to tease me every now and

then to ask my father to engage their services. In case they were engaged as private tutors, they promised me that they would make me proficient in every subject, including arithmetic. I did not blame their solicitude, because some of them did not earn more than seven or ten dollars a month. However, my father never entertained their proposals, as he was a believer in self-help in matters of acquiring an education which would really educate.

Just before the summer vacation the school would hold its sessions (for at least two weeks) from six o'clock in the morning until ten. I remember when I returned home from the "morning school," as we called it, it used to be so warm that I could not eat my breakfast until an hour later. Our schools closed on Saturdays at one-thirty or two o'clock in the afternoon. We had three long vacations during the year; the summer vacation, extending over a month and a half between June and

July; the Pujā vacation in October came next, when schools closed for about a month; and last of all, the Christmas and the New Year's holidays of two weeks.

Besides the long vacations, we had a number of holidays mostly on the occasions of religious festivals (Hindu, Mohammedan, and Christian). The joys of our long vacation were often crushed by the assignment of long lessons by our teachers. The home tasks were dreaded by all the boys. It is not hard to find the reason for this; for example, during one of our long vacations one teacher asked us to work out at least three hundred problems in arithmetic, two hundred in algebra, and one hundred in geometry. Another expected the students to read about one hundred pages of geography and commit to memory the names of all the counties and county towns of Great Britain and Ireland as well as the States and capitals of the United States. Still another selected fifteen topics on which to

write essays. I am not sure whether schools in America are in the habit of having the students learn the names of Indian provinces. I did not feel very eager to go to school when it reopened after a long vacation. That lack of enthusiasm was noticed by everybody in the family.

I began the reading of the *First English Primer* in our school when I was six and one-half years old. I had been familiar with the alphabets and the first few lessons. Consequently a foreign language like English did not appear very hard to me. We did not learn the correct pronunciation of English words, as we were not taught by English-speaking teachers. In my eighth year *English Grammar* appeared to be very hard, but I got over the difficulty later. Most of the teachers in Indian schools are Indians (either Hindus or Mohammedans). Languages, history, geography, and drawing were my favorite subjects. My two elder sisters knew English and Bengali fairly well for their age.

They always helped me in the preparation of my home lessons.

Examinations were interesting episodes in our young lives. We had oral as well as written examinations, which came at the end of each half-year. Most of my classmates spent the last two weeks of the year in preparing for the annual examinations, on the result of which alone depended our promotion to the next higher class. There was very little cheating or "cribbing" at the written examinations, for our teachers, who acted as "guards" (as we called them) were very strict. If anybody was found copying from another's paper or "cribbing" from notes, he was sure to be turned out of the examination room and to be detained in the same class for another year. The burden of examination is so crushing that many students at school neglect their health and suffer severely from continued illness.

On one occasion a classmate of mine snatched away my answer-paper in arith-

metic and worked out several sums correctly during the examination period. He passed in that paper with my name on it and threatened me with dire results if I dared to disclose his act to the examiner. When the marks came out, I discovered that for the first time in that school I had a grade of more than fifty per cent. in arithmetic,—which was very unusual for me. I felt ashamed, for I did not deserve that mark.

When I was about eight years old, I read the story of George Washington in our English text book “Royal Readers No. 2” (published by T. Nelson & Sons). That was my first introduction to the great American. About the same time I read, in a Bengali school book, the story of Theodore Parker’s early life. That eminent Bostonian’s love of knowledge created a thrill in my heart. A few years later, when I entered the high school, we had selections from “The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin” and “Uncle

Tom's Cabin " to read in our English class. By that time I finished reading a translation of "Uncle Tom's Cabin " in our language. Not a few were the occasions when I shed tears over the pages of that book while reading it in the afternoons and evenings. Man's inhumanity to man distressed me so much that I could not help reading and rereading certain portions of the book.

My mother used to recite a couplet in Bengali which ran thus:

“ He who reads and writes,
Has a car and a horse to ride! ”

I do not know whether schoolboys in the United States know any such rhymes. But in my boyhood days those lines were on everybody's lips. They were supposed to offer inducements to boys to prosecute their studies. Somehow or other they did not have any meaning for me. They failed to stir me up to read and write more than I was doing. Some of the Indian

schools offer prizes (mostly in the shape of books) to their best students on the basis of the annual examination. At the end of my second year, on the occasion of the prize distribution, to my surprise I received the second prize in my class. It was a copy of "The Life of James Watt" and a history of the steam-engine. In that book I read all about Robert Fulton and the steamship. I saw also pictures of big American locomotives and railroad tracks. In my fourth year I got the first prize in my class. It was a copy of an illustrated edition of "Uncle Tom's Cabin." I considered that a real prize. Thus America was brought nearer home when I was very young. In those days, America appeared to me as a far-off dreamland.

I have already described the Guru Mohāshay (sir teacher) of a *pāthshālā* (elementary school) who presides over it with a cane in his hand. The indiscriminate (or free) use of the cane by some teachers in the higher and better-equipped schools

robbed punishment of all its horrors. There was the dunce's cap with the inscription "Ass" on it. Several times I saw some of my schoolmates visiting different classes along with another who explained the nature of the crime for which he had been punished. Two other forms of punishment were very popular with certain teachers. To stand upon the bench or to kneel down on the floor of the classroom for half an hour, or a full period of fifty or fifty-five minutes, were such favorites that some of the pupils used to call the teachers by the name of their favored form of punishment. I wonder whether the teachers had any knowledge of that!

The punishment which we dreaded most was that of forcing us to pose like an arm-chair with two books or bricks on the palms of our hands, and without any rest on the back. Very few could stand this for more than five or ten minutes. I remember also that one of my teachers made a rule that for every mistake we made in

reciting our lessons in English we should receive one blow of his cane on the palm.

The tricks which the schoolboys used to play on their teachers were very few. If the performers could be detected, the matter had to be referred to the head-master by the teacher, provided he had been without any fault in his dealings with the students. Some of the older teachers were in the habit of falling asleep in class while listening to the recitation. The teachers and students carried small boxes of snuff. The best-known trick practised on a teacher when he fell asleep was the placing of a snuff-box under his nose. One of the daring heroes would volunteer his services and slowly step to the teacher's chair and place the box of snuff in such a way that he would begin sneezing immediately. The class had already agreed not to betray the leader, and as a result the teacher tried in vain to detect the mischief-maker. Some of the Brāhmin teachers, known as *pandits*, used to carry a tuft of hair on the

crown of their heads. Whenever such a teacher fell asleep he was apt to be the victim of one of his students. I remember once how one of my classmates tied, with a piece of string, the *tiki* or *shikhā* (tuft of hair) of a pandit to the back of his chair. After that marvelous feat a few of the students shouted, "Pandit Mohayshoy! Pandit Mohāyshaya! (or Sir! Sir!) The head-master is coming!" And then came the after effect when the enraged teacher could not force his head from the back of the chair. He roared, threatened, and cursed the students. But by that time they had become so engrossed in their lessons (as they showed by their undivided attention to the pages of their books) that all the threats of the teacher fell on deaf ears.

CHAPTER IV

BOYHOOD MEMORIES

1. *Street Cries*

As soon as I found myself awake one winter morning in India, I heard the cry of boys: "Murir Chākti, Cholār Chākti, Chirer Chākti." It was the pedlars hawking early morning breakfast-food in the shape of round slabs or balls of puffed rice, flattened or pressed rice, prepared with molasses. Shortly after I heard an older voice repeating, "Chai Khajoor Rash," and "Chai tāt kā khajoor rash." This meant that a man was going along with an earthen jar (*kalsi*) on his shoulders. He was selling the fresh juice of the date palm. The unfermented juice is very cool, sweet, and refreshing. A little later a man would come up the street carrying a big, black earthen jar on his

head. He would cry aloud, "Chai gāoā ghee," or, "Who wants pure clarified butter made of cow's milk?" In India we also use butter made of buffalo's milk.

We will suppose that it is almost nine o'clock. Children are getting ready for school. They are arranging their books and slates. There appears on the street a man with two small canvas bags slung over his two shoulders. His dress is soiled and he wears a short turban on his head. He cries, "Jutā, burush! selāi! burush!" He is the cobbler who mends my shoes and also polishes them in case I need a shine. He is a moving shoe-shine parlor and cobbler's shop in one. I can have his services for a few cents. In his wake comes another slim and bewhiskered man with a small bundle under his arm. His cry is melodious, "Ripukarma," "Who wants a darner?" He is a Mohammedan by birth, and wears a colored checked skirt and a short vest. The professional darner may turn out to be a good tailor, too.

And if I want, I can have my coat and shirt made by him in my house. Such are the advantages of Calcutta life.

As the day advances and sunlight becomes brighter, children can be seen walking through the streets toward their schools. Cowherds are also on their way to the pastures leading their cows out of the homes of the people. Children meet a man on the street crying, "Churi, kānchi, bonti, shān!" He is carrying a big wheel on a wooden frame. He is the knife-, scissors-, and "bonti-" sharpener or grinder. *Bonti* is the sword-shaped steel instrument which is fitted erect to a piece of wood. Every Hindu housewife uses it for cutting vegetables, and peeling potatoes or fruits. "Bontis" are also used in fish and meat stores for cutting fish and meat for the customers.

As noon approaches, the short and shrill cry: "Shil katavé!" is heard. The crier has a small cloth bag which he has placed on his right shoulder. The bag contains

two or three hammers and a similar number of large and small flattened nails. He is going round sharpening the flat pieces of stones on which the spices are crushed every morning in Hindu homes for use in different kinds of cooking.¹ During the summer months in the afternoon any visitor to our city will see a man carrying a small wooden case on his head. The name of the "Standard Oil Company of New York," or "Gossage's Bar Soap," may be found stamped on the box. He cries aloud, "Pāni pinekā baraf." (Accent on first word.) "Ice to use with water." So terrible is the heat of the glowing sun that one can drink ten glasses of iced water without quenching his thirst in the least. Many people wrap themselves with wet towels (*gāmchās*) made by Indian weavers on their hand looms.

The afternoon advances. Several men

¹ Black and red pepper, mustard and tumeric are the principal spices used in cooking besides the *garam mashlā* (or hot spices).

with baskets approach the public squares, the schools and other places where they can display their articles before the children. They sell and sing and sing and sell, “Chānachur garam,” or “Abāk jalpān,” or “Chiner bādām, ghoognidānā nakaldānā!” These men are selling boiled beans and peas mixed with bits of cocoanut and peanuts. One has for sale what is known as “Thirty-two and one-half varieties of fried things,” peas, beans, rice, wheat, ginger, red pepper, green pepper, black pepper, etc. No doubt all these are highly spiced, peppered, salted, and lemoned. They are very appetizing and children always run for them, if they have a few *paishās* (pennies) to spare,—just as children run for candy in the United States. One can also meet vendors of sweet candy made of sugar only. They deal in various kinds of representations of animals and other articles which are carried in push-carts or trays. The peanut-seller is also very much in evidence. In

Calcutta we call him “Chiner bādām-wolā,” or “the seller of the nut of China.”

The gentle breeze from the south has been blowing for some time. People are in a restful mood. As the shades of evening approach, the streets of Calcutta have become filled with the cry of the Hindu ice-cream-sellers. They carry big earthen pots around which they wrap pieces of canvas. By this time, the lamplighters are rushing through the streets, either carrying their ladder or lighter. The streets are all lighted. “Kulpi Ba-ra-f!” That is the familiar cry. “Ho, *kulpi baraf*-seller, come here!” shouts the boy. The ice-cream (*kulpi baraf*) vendor approaches slowly. He unwraps his burden and opens the mouth of the earthen pot which is kept covered with an earthen plate. He asks invariably, like the men on the soda fountains of the United States, “What flavor do you want? I have here pineapple, banana, mango, green cocoanut, or cream (*mālāi*),—which of these?”

As soon as the order is given the man takes out a five-inch tin tube, narrowed at one end and with the cover at the top sealed by flour paste. He turns the tube round and round by means of his two palms and asks his customer to bring a cup or a glass. In a few seconds he releases the ice-cream from the tin case. If one looks into the inside of the earthen pot he will find several chunks of ice and a lot of salt. This is pure Calcutta ice-cream, which tastes in some cases like sherbet as sold in the ice-cream parlors of the United States. Another type of ice-cream-sellers go round the city with the freezers, and dole out ice-cream direct from them. Hotels sell a better quality of ice-cream, which not only costs more, but is not within the easy reach of all people.

Very few women of the upper classes go out of their houses to make purchases in stores or in the market. Those who observe seclusion (*purdāh*) hardly ever walk through the streets. They travel in closed

carriages drawn by horses. A few years ago they were carried in *pālkis* or palanquins. During the forenoon and afternoon hours a number of fruit-, vegetable-, cloth-, and other vendors go round the houses exhibiting their articles before *purdāh* women or zenana ladies. Both are of foreign origin, and the custom of seclusion grew in Hindu India since the days of the Mohammedans. Women in Calcutta do a great deal of their purchasing in this way, after much bargaining. The street cries of Calcutta, among others, give a very true picture of the city life. There are cries which are peculiar to the winter months; and some, like those of the iceman and the ice-cream-seller, are characteristic of the summer months.

2. *The Snake-Charmers and the Rope-Dancers*

Pain—pont—pin—sounds the music outside. “Mother, shall I call the snake-charmer?” asks the boy. Waiting

anxiously for his mother's reply, he leans out of the window.

"Go ahead. Call him, my child," answers the mother.

He is so expectant that the mother can hardly refuse him. He runs out of the house into the street and waves his hand.

"Ho, Snake-Charmer! Come to our house!"

The snake-charmer, who is dressed in orange-colored *dhuti* or trousers, a loose shirt or a short coat, and a turban of the same color turns round the street corner and advances toward the house.¹

He is playing on his peculiar flute a kind of sweet, but weird, music (which has some resemblance to the music of the bagpipe, though a little louder). From both ends of a pole carried across his shoulders there are two slings. On each one of them he is carrying three or four covered wicker

¹ I have seen snake-charmers who wear *dhutis* and loose shirts, as well as those who wear loose trousers and short coats.

baskets of different sizes. He lets these down on the street and continues playing the music. In the course of a few minutes people gather round him. Children from other houses in the neighborhood have come out to witness the tricks of the snake-charmers.

When the snake-charmer sees that a sufficient number of men, women, and children have gathered round him, he begins to unpack his baskets. He takes off the cover from a basket and there is a big cobra in it. He begins to talk about snakes, their fangs, their abodes in hills and jungles. He pulls open the mouth of the snake and shows the fangs, to clear himself of the charge that he has destroyed those terrible weapons of defence which poisonous snakes always have. One by one he takes out a few more snakes and begins to play on the flute. The snakes raise their heads, spread their hoods and continue dancing, following closely the notes of the music. In this way he con-

tinues for half an hour and empties one after another all the baskets, showing twelve or fifteen varieties of snakes and scorpions.

When I was a boy of about seven years, I saw one of the snake-charmers pulling out snakes from every possible nook and corner of the neighborhood. He had a small towel in his hand. But before he went out in search of a new snake he had shown his towel to some member of the audience, who failed to detect any trace of a snake in it. It was really amazing!

At the end the snake-charmer takes a small cup or a box (or he may even spread a long piece of cloth on the ground) and invites contribution from the audience. It is a free-will offering. The snake-charmer usually expects a larger sum from the house of the boy who first called him. So the boy's mother unties the knot at one end of her robe which serves as her pocket-book. She hands him a silver coin (*siki*, *ādhulī*, or *tākā*, *i. e.*, one-quarter, one-half,

or one rupee¹), to her boy, who runs to the snake-charmer and presents it to him. The man is happy. He packs up his load, bows or *salaams* to his audience, and especially to the boy's mother, who is watching him from the window, and then moves along the way playing the old snake-charmer's music. Children know perfectly well that there is nothing to fear from the snake-charmer.

The rope-dancers in India show wonderful balancing feats high up in the air. Sometimes they run, jump, and dance on a piece of rope attached to two poles. At the same time they carry on their heads fifteen or twenty earthen jars placed one upon the other.

3. *Sādhus and Fakirs*

The longer winter evenings had come. My father and I stayed up very late one night—it was past ten o'clock. We were talking about our school days—father and

¹ A silver coin about the size of a half-dollar piece and valued at thirty-two cents.

son comparing notes. A man holding a shaded kerosene-oil lamp stepped in and in the name of *Āllāh* muttered a few words ending with, “*M-u-s-k-i-l, Ā-s-h-ā-n!*”

This strange man was a Mohammedan who wanted to offer something to the altar of a Mohammedan saint. He was, therefore, going round on his begging tour with a lighted lamp. I gave him a pice (half a cent in value). Whereupon he took up a pin and put a black mark on my forehead with the soot of the lamp. Children in Calcutta are very familiar with this late evening visitor. This type of Mohammedan mendicant is favored even by the Hindus. Some of them worship at the shrine of Mohammedan saints just as Mohammedans do at the shrine of Hindu saints. Here Hindus and Mohammedans are not at daggers-drawn trying to cut each other's throats as they are often represented. Here at least they unite—for the saints of both communities provide their common meeting-ground.

Friday is the sacred day of the Mohammedans. So it is with the Hindus also, besides Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday. The Hindus observe Sunday, not as a Sabbath day, but as a semi-auspicious occasion. The last days of the months are also sacred to the Hindus (*Sankrānti*). On such occasions streams of beggars can be seen lining up the streets and especially all ways leading toward the bathing-places on the banks of the Ganges. Some of them carry musical instruments, such as drums, cymbals, tambourines, violins, etc., and play on them and sing. There are others who sing only. A mendicant quartet can be seen at a street corner, singing devotional hymns with their musical accompaniment. Beggar soloists with a violin or one-stringed instrument come and sing at the doors. Men, women, and children—all are alike welcome to this profession. They beg in the name of their respective gods or goddesses. Such beggars may carry a bowl, basket, or bag into

which they consign everything they receive. Those who can sing ask for alms at the end of their singing. Some of them have marks on their foreheads by which one can recognize their sects. “Jay Radhé, duti bhikke pāvo ma” (Victory be to Rādhā—[a goddess] may I have some alms, Mother), so cries one woman beggar. Some of these beggars have wonderful patience. They can wait for hours. Children are usually sent by women of the household to the waiting beggars. Most children love to offer alms to the beggars, because they feel that they are doing something; they look forward to such an opportunity. They approach the beggars with a cup of rice (or flour), a few vegetables, or one *paishā*. The beggars accept that which they get and bless the children or the housewives, saying, “May you have gold pen and inkstand to write with when you grow older,” or, “May you be the queen of a king,” or, “May you have lots of beautiful children and diamonds.” Not

a few are the occasions when the beggars even criticize the quality of the alms or the studied negligence of the householders in not listening to their prayers. In some homes a very inferior quality of rice is kept especially for the beggars.

There is another type of beggar who is very annoying. They come to extort alms by threats, if they fail in their entreaties. Some belong to gangs controlled by a master. I have seen such masters or leaders of beggar gangs going around their beats, inspecting the actions of the members of the gangs. Deformed or diseased beggars on the wayside are supposed to cry aloud and express their intolerable pain and suffering by gestures to attract the attention. In this way onlookers are moved to pity and to unloose their purse-strings. The inspectors who go around sometimes collect all the earnings of the beggars in their periodical rounds during the day. Some of the beggars not only make their voices hoarse by

crying for alms for about an hour, but even curse the householders for not attending to the beggar's demands, which he claims to be just, since charity blesses the giver more than the receiver. I liked to watch the beggars in my childhood.

Sanyāsis (friars) and *sādhus* (saints) are held in great veneration by the masses in India. They correspond to the Moham-medan *fakirs* (pronounced "fokeer," and not "faker," as in America). These men, by virtue of renouncing the common way of living, exercise a great influence on the lives of the people. Some of them do not talk on account of their acceptance of the vow of silence. Others do not eat nor drink. A great majority of the common *sādhus* go around the country begging for their food and raiment, however sparse that may be. They besmear their bodies from head to foot with ashes, and wear long, unkempt, matted hair coiled round their heads in various styles. Some of them are very scantily dressed, either



HINDU SADHU, OR RELIGIOUS MENDICANT.

wearing a short loin-cloth or a piece of leopard or antelope skin. Some *sādhus*, indeed, wear no clothes at all. Another class appear more like monks of the West and have shaven heads. They wear the *gairic* (dark orange-colored) robe (like a tunic) of the mendicant friars. Some of them wear turbans while others go bare-headed. The *Dandis* carry a stick or staff with them. Most of the *sādhus* either carry a black begging-bowl made out of the shell of a gourd or pumpkin. That is the only vessel they are supposed to carry, besides a pair of tongs with which they tend the fire and collect the ashes to decorate their bodies. It is said that the ashes keep their bodies cool in summer, and warm in winter months. Some of the *sanyāsis* have the title "*swāmi*" prefixed to their names. The etymological meaning of the word is "husband" or "lord," though all are, as one of our great men once said, "Wifeless husbands."

Pictures typifying a *sādhu* show a man

squatted on a nest of spikes, sometimes being drawn through the streets on wheels attached to a board. He always keeps one of his arms stretched upward and thereby stiffens the muscles for all time. These pictures are familiar to the average American reader. They have been popularized by American Christian Missionaries. Some of them at least do these feats simply to earn money as a juggler does. People who understand that do not pay any respect to such men, for they know these are not marks of spirituality. Some of the *sādhus* carry herbs and stones which may have some medicinal value. Through the distribution of such remedies they exert an exaggerated influence on many. They also influence women by telling fortunes while the men of the household are away on business.

In my early boyhood, I met many *sādhus* and *fakirs* who came to talk with my uncle. I did not like the professional *sādhus*. Even some of the unprofessional

ones did not greatly interest me. One morning a *sādhu* dressed in a long, orange-colored robe came to our house. My father told us that he had met him the day before. After a short talk in Hindi, he opened his mouth and took out a perfectly round piece of black stone. He swallowed it again and showed the empty cavity of his mouth. Again and again he did the trick and we were all unable to account for the disappearance of the stone. He also printed several letters in Sanskrit on a piece of paper floating on a glass of water without making the least attempt to write. Last of all he asked my father to lend him a rupee. As soon as the rupee was handed to him he swallowed it. On my father's demanding the coin back the *sādhu* flatly refused. We realized then that he was playing another trick. The price which he exacted from my father for showing these few tricks was rather heavy. He wanted to show others, but my father showed him the door.

In my tenth year a much-advertised *sādhū* came to Calcutta. He paraded through the streets with several hundred of his disciples. He stayed in Calcutta for several weeks, during which time he made great preparations for a sacrifice. He was carried around the city by bearers in a golden litter. Gold, silver, diamonds, figured profusely in everything carried in the processions (*i. e.*, flags, staffs, etc.); and he became the talk of the town. Some of his processions, as well as the parades I used to watch in Calcutta on the Vijoyā-dasami day (when the image of the goddess Durgā was thrown into the Ganges) remind me of the many parades I have witnessed in the United States, however different their character may be.

There are good *sādhūs* and bad *sādhūs*, good *fakirs*, and bad *fakirs*. I have seen many *fakirs* treating diseases on street corners without accepting a single penny as fee. I have seen good *sādhūs*, too, though they are very few in number. As a rule

the majority of the good *sādhus* avoid publicity. The true *swāmi* or master is an interesting person, but he shuns publicity and cheap popularity, for he knows by yielding to the craze for publicity he renounces his claim to self-mastery. If properly trained and equipped, the *sādhus* and *fakirs* of India can be made useful servants of the people. That was their true vocation during the days of India's greatness. Without any organization to back them up, the *sādhus* travel all over India from year's end to year's end. The three chief orders of the *sādhus* are those of *Giri*, *Puri*, and *Bhārati*.

4. *The Bear Girl*

When I was about seven years old I saw a girl whom we called "The Bear Girl." She had been mothered by bears in the jungle. Hers is a sad, interesting story. At the Calcutta Orphanage in those days the superintendent was my father's friend. That year, if I remember

correctly, saw one of the worst of Indian famines. People and cattle died by hundreds and thousands during that period. In fact, the loss by death in any of our famines is appalling. The only saving feature of the famine is that it never prevails all over India at the same time. Famines are usually followed by epidemics such as cholera and smallpox. Bubonic plague is another epidemic which causes a great many deaths each year. Famines and epidemics are such frequent visitors that people become used to these unwelcome visits.

My father's friend was a famine-relief worker during that year. In the course of the administration of relief work he was walking, one day, through a forest path. He heard a peculiar cry, half human and half animal. He went toward the forest from which the cry came. Half-hidden among the trees, he saw the form of a child which appeared at first sight more like an animal of the jungle—a bear cub.

When he approached nearer, he discovered that it was a girl who was walking like a bear. So he called a few of his co-workers, and with their help, brought her back to the relief camp.

After careful observation, the superintendent of the Calcutta Orphanage found out that the girl resembled bear cubs in most of her behavior. She bore distinct marks of having been suckled by mother bears in jungles. The kind-hearted superintendent decided to take the girl to his orphanage and try to teach her human ways of living. When the "bear girl" was brought down to Calcutta, many people went to the orphanage to see her. One evening our family made a trip to the orphanage in one of those closed "hackney carriages," drawn by two horses, which are to be seen in Calcutta, conveying passengers from one part of the city to another. On our arrival, the superintendent's wife told us that it was extremely difficult for them to teach the girl the ways

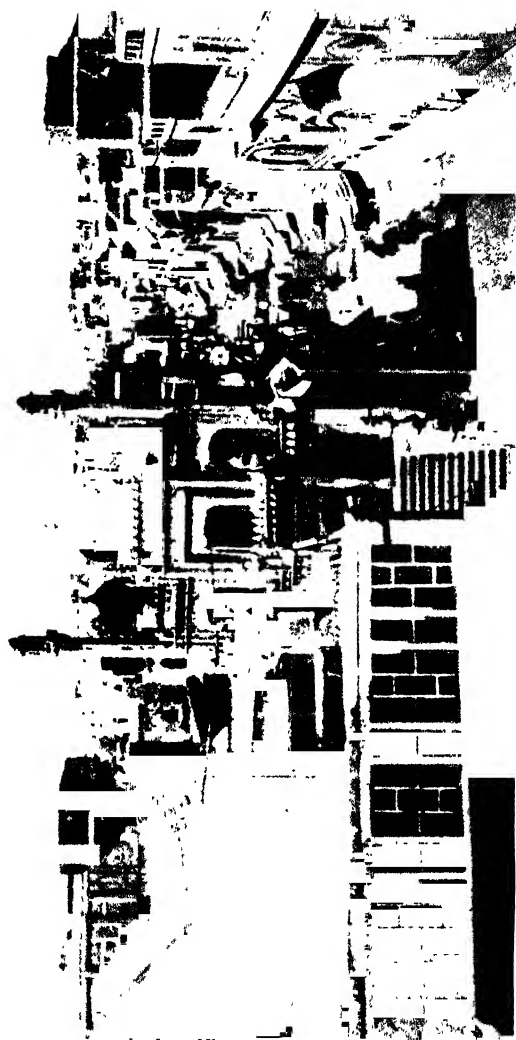
of human beings. She would act like an ordinary child for a while if shown what to do; she would watch, make mistakes, and try again. But after acting rather human for some time she would suddenly break loose and act like an animal, tearing her clothes, scattering everything that she could lay her hands upon, breaking furniture. We were told that in the dining-room she would go on eating with the other children as usual. In the middle of the meal she would mix up everything on the plate (a piece of banana leaf), and scatter all her food. Then she would try to eat the banana leaf instead of rice and cooked vegetables. She had undoubtedly a preference for raw articles of food.

The strict life of civilization proved too much for our "bear girl." One day she was taken sick, and she died in the course of a few hours. We heard of similar cases in which human babies were nursed by animal mothers and brought up according to their ways of living. Such babies had

been either forsaken by parents during the worst days of famine or left unprotected after the death of their parents, until the animals (bear, tiger, etc.) came and became their foster mothers. A baby who had been brought up by tigers for several years and then restored to his parents by some hunters could not be tamed at all. His parents recognized him easily because he had a bangle on the wrist of his right arm. He could not be reëducated to human modes of living. He had to be fed with raw meat and living animals. He could not stand erect like a man. He always used to walk exactly like a tiger. Such incidents prove that probably there may be some truth in the stories about man's friendship with animals.

People in large cities like Calcutta do not realize how tragic the sufferings of famine-stricken districts are. My mother never allowed us to waste any food during our meals. She always reminded us of the thousands who were going hungry

every day within the borders of India. During periods of famine vast tracts of country appear like deserts with dead bodies of men, women, and children as well as those of animals rotting around under the scorching rays of the sun. Hunger and thirst drive many to insanity. Some of them not only eat carcasses of animals but also the flesh of dead human bodies. Mothers leave their children and husbands, their wives. The failure of rain has, no doubt, something to do with famines. But the real cause lies in the ever-growing poverty of the people. The peasants suffer from heavy taxation. This seldom leaves any saving to be used during hard times. A large number of them have to borrow money at a high rate of interest almost half of the year in order to live. The Indian money-lender charges an exorbitant rate of interest.



CHAPTER V

GAMES AND SPORTS

NEXT to eating, the most important thing in the life of the children is play. Children are the same everywhere in the world. If they can play, they will not go to school. Some of them will even forget all about their meals. When I was a boy I often played most of the games which boys love to play in our part of India. During my high-school days I took prominent part in sports. I was secretary of the football club of my class and often acted as umpire.

While very young we played the game of "hide-and-sceek" in the school as well as in our homes. Boys and girls played this game as it is played all the world over. As I was younger than most of my friends, in some games they used to treat

me as what they called “ *bélé khelā* ” or an extra minor, *i. e.*, not a full-fledged member of the party. I did not like the idea, but I had to submit to age, which counts a great deal in India.

The most popular game played, not only by boys and girls but even by grown up men, is known as Ha-do-do, Kapati, Kit-kit, Chel-diglé, and a few other names. It is played in a large rectangular court (either indoor or outdoor), between two parties consisting of three or more players on each side. The court is divided at the middle by a line which forms the base.

The rules of Ha-do-do or Kapati are very simple. The two parties take turns in sending one of their members to the opposite court. The game consists of attack by a single member and defence by the entire party attacked. The attacking player goes to the base, takes a deep breath, and slowly enters the court of the rival party. He makes a sound like “ ha-do-do,” “ kapati,” “ kit-kit,” “ chel-

digle," or "choo," in order to prove that he is holding his breath. When he enters the opponent's court, he waves his hand with a view to touch or strike as many members as he can. The players whom he touches are considered "dead," and retire for the rest of the game. All this time, he will have to hold his breath. If he loses it, he will become a dead member and retire. On the other hand, if the party attacked, or any member can get hold of him securely inside their court so that he is unable to reach the base or touch it by extending his hands or feet, he is "dead" and is retired for the rest of the game.

In this way the attack and defence continue during the course of the game. When an attacking member tries to get back to his home court or reach the base lying down with his fingers or toes extended the real struggle begins. This is an exciting but inexpensive national game. When it is played in some of our public

parks no admission is charged. On some occasions I noticed that spectators became so excited that instead of cheering, they entered the courts and joined the game.

Another game called *guli dāndā* or ball and bat is played with two pieces of sticks, one long and the other very short. The longer one, about thirty-five inches in length, is the *dāndā* and serves as a bat, while the shorter one, about five or six inches long, called *guli*, serves as a ball. It can be played with two or more players. The game starts from a base. As soon as the ball is struck it flies high up and returns to the ground. The distance from the base is measured by the length of the bat, which determines the score in the game. He who completes the highest number of points,—say fifty to one hundred—retires from the game as victorious. The one who scores the smallest number of points is the defeated player. His score is usually subtracted from the victor's and he has to serve his victor at least the same

number of points by which he has been defeated. That part of the game is called "slaving," for the defeated party has to run every time the ball flies up and bring it back to the victor at the base. There is not much pleasure either in "slaving" or making others "slave," as it is usually done in this game. I remember many occasions when the victor would drop this part entirely out of the game.

Besides these games there are a few more called "Thief! Thief!", "Land and Water," and "Blind man-bee." The last one when played is always accompanied by the cry "Touch, touch, blind bee, touch me quick, if you can touch me at all!" There are numerous wishing games played with seeds of fruits and vegetables. But these are all indoor games. One very interesting game called "*Golakdhām*" or "Journey to Heaven" has a very ancient origin. It is played on a printed chart with squares full of pictures of man's life on earth beginning

with home, farm, workshop, school, temple, saloon, prison, etc. The idea is simple. If one's dice (in the shape of small shells) when cast take him to a bad place, he immediately goes down and begins all over again. For example, if one enters the saloon or the prison, he will have to go back and begin life again. In this way one is prevented from making a continuous journey toward "heaven." To me it appeared to be an instructive game which impresses on the minds of the players the good and the bad side of life with their consequences.

Football, which is not so expensive as the other foreign games, can claim more players among schoolboys than any other game. The football which is played in India is what is known as "soccer" in the United States and "Association" in England as distinguished from "Rugby." "Association" football or "Soccer" football has become very popular, even in the country districts. Hockey and polo are

also played, the former by boys, and the latter by rich people. Polo originated in India several centuries ago, during the rule of the Hindu kings.

In my school days I played marbles, especially in winter. I was never good at playing wooden tops, though I remember that the courtyard of our school did not have any space left for any other game than tops during part of the winter. In all our games, whenever we wanted to find out the one with whom the game was to begin we recited a couplet like the “Eeny, meeny, miny, mo” in the United States: “Ram dui, Saré tin—Ghorar dim.” When translated into English it reads thus: “One, two, three and half, what do I care for horse’s egg?”

During the football season in Calcutta, many games are played in the large open space near Fort William known as the Maidan (which literally means “meadow”). The city of Calcutta has the Maidan where more than twenty

sporting clubs have their playgrounds. As football is more spectacular than cricket, it attracts more people. Shields, cups, and medals are offered to various clubs in connection with contested games. Sometimes more than one hundred thousand people gather round the field to watch a game. Admissions are charged for most of these games. The Indian Football Association of Calcutta supports some of the local charities out of the proceeds of the admission tickets. A healthful spirit of competition is created through these games. Almost every school and college in Calcutta has its football club.

In recent years the Y. M. C. A., through its college and boys' branches, has helped much in popularizing American games, like basketball, volley ball, etc. Swimming is another sport in which boys and girls in the country excel. Walking and running trips covering long distances are undertaken by the boys. Opportunities for swimming in town as well as in the

country are many. Girls learn to swim by resting on earthen or brass *kalsi* (water vessels).

Wrestling is one of the most favored sports. One of my classmates has become a champion wrestler and has been doing very well in most of his encounters. Several years ago stick-and-sword playing was very popular among boys and young men. They learned those arts in Indian gymnasiums, all of which have been closed by orders of the government. The closing put a stop to the physical education of a great many boys who needed it very badly. The government feared that boys trained in the arts of playing stick-and-sword might start a rebellion. Consequently not only the carrying of arms but even of long and heavy sticks was prohibited.

Flying paper kites is a very interesting game. In the course of such flying, two or three fliers may engage in a fight with their kites. They try to cut across the thread of their rivals by skillful manipula-

tion of the thread in a crisscross way. They keep their thread in a reel made of bamboo, with a handle at each end. A great deal of cheering goes on when one succeeds in cutting the thread of his rival's kite. Sometimes boys fly their kites on the flat and unprotected roofs of their houses in Calcutta. They become so absorbed in their kites and the contest that they forget all about the dangers which may befall them if they slip. Every year a few accidents occur in Calcutta, in which boys sustain slight or heavy injuries by falling headlong from the roofs of their homes to the street or courtyard. The thread used in flying kites is carefully reinforced with a special preparation of a paste from rice, and ground glass and mica. Sometimes boys dye the thread with different-colored dyes. The kites are usually made of very thin paper of all kinds of colors and sizes.

CHAPTER VI

FOOD AND DRESS

WHAT do the children eat in India?

The great majority of the children—and grown people, too—eat puffed rice in the morning. Babies are fed with milk; but as good milk is not always and everywhere available, young children have a very hard time. Where milk can be had, children get their share of it once or twice a day or oftener. In most houses, puffed rice (*muri* or *murki*), light molasses cake (*bātāsā*), a few bits of cocoanut or a few slices of cucumbers or onions will be the only early breakfast. In Calcutta and other cities there are *khābarer dokān*, or food shops, where cooked food can be purchased for a few pennies.

There are all kinds of food-vendors who go around the city hawking their articles.

Most of our sweets are made of milk, flour, and sugar. Some are cooked fresh every morning. In our home, some mornings we had a kind of pudding prepared from cream of wheat (*suji*) which is first fried with a little *ghce* (clarified butter) and then milk, sugar, and water are added. Some older people eat a handful of green peas (raw), *cholā* (a kind of red pea) or split peas soaked in water with a little salt and a few pieces of ginger.

The late breakfast comes between nine and eleven o'clock. In certain homes no early breakfast is served. Farmers in the villages do not eat any breakfast. They have one meal at noon. Whether in the morning or in the evening in India, we do not have exact meal hours for all members of the family, as the custom is in the West. In certain homes, first come, first served, is the rule. On account of the definite hours of opening of schools, colleges, courts, and offices, some families have to observe definite meal hours in the morn-

ing; but everybody is free in the evening. Women of the household eat last of all. This has been the custom from ancient times. This may appear very strange in the western part of the world, but it is a custom which in India is observed by rich and poor alike. Even homes which employ cooks follow this rule. I remember that my father used to eat some nights at eleven or twelve o'clock. At present, in certain homes, men, women, and children, eat together and have definite hours, but they are the exceptions.

In our home my mother used to cook most of the time. My father, uncles, sisters were all very good cooks. The morning meal in an Indian home, or late breakfast, consists of *bhāt* or cooked rice, which is the staple food in Bengal. A quantity of rice in the shape of a mound is placed at one end of a large metal plate. Banana leaves are also used as plates, in which case rice is ladled out of a big bowl. In Bengal we sit on the floor. A square

wooden board (*piri*), a small carpet or a mat forms the seat. The metal plates, or banana leaves, are placed just opposite the seats. The plates, cups, and glasses are made of *kānsā* (a composition made of brass, copper, and zinc). When properly cleaned and polished, some of them look like silver. Besides rice, we eat a thin split-pea soup (without any meat in it). The soup is served in metal cups or is poured on the rice, and is usually spiced and cooked with tumeric and a little red pepper.

The rice is cooked in large earthenware pots or brass vessels called "*hāri*." There are a hundred varieties of rice. Special stores for rice only are to be found in every city. Rice is also sold in markets and groceries. Prices vary according to the quality. There are red, white, and gray rice. Burma rice has a different shape. The stores usually sell rice in large paper bags or canvas bags—not in cardboard packages, as is done in the United States. Rice

is cooked in such a way that every grain remains separate, as among the Japanese. In Bengal the water in which rice is cooked is not all absorbed by the rice in the process of cooking. It is thrown away, though it contains nutritious elements. The sentiment of loyalty is very strong amongst the people of India. During the seizure of Arcot, the Indian sepoy kept alive many English soldiers by giving them their share of rice, while the former ate the watery part which is usually thrown away. The widows and orthodox Brahmins eat *ātap* rice which is sun-dried, *i. e.*, which has not been previously boiled with the husk. The majority of the people of Bengal eat rice which has been previously slightly boiled with the husk before it is purchased from the store. Farmers are in the habit of eating cold rice which gets sour.

Besides rice and split-pea soup (of which there are about ten or twelve varieties), vegetables—either boiled or fried—

are served; eggplant, potatoes, cabbage, cauliflower, beet, turnip, green peas, pumpkin, gourd, tomatoes, *patal* (*trichosanthes dioiea*), *uchhé* (*momordica muricata*), *jhingé*, *karolā*, green bananas, green jack fruit, *mochā* (or banana embryo), etc., are used in making soups, hash and numerous other preparations which are very tasty. The split-pea soup is called “*dāl*.” On every boat sailing between England and India “*dāl*” is served for lunch and the item appears on the menu as “dahl curry.” “*Dāl*” is very nutritious, but there are many Indians who are so poor that they cannot afford to eat “*dāl*” oftener than once or twice a week.

No tables, chairs, forks, knives, or spoons are used in Indian homes. People eat with the fingers of the right hand. In orthodox Hindu homes no one can eat with the fingers of the left hand. Those who have adopted the Western style of living in India (their number is very few) have all the paraphernalia of a regular din-

ing-room of Europe and America. Fish is a very popular food in Bengal. Fresh-water fishing is a great industry in our part of the country. People have not yet developed any great taste for what is known in the United States as sea food. Sometimes fish and vegetables are cooked together. Strict Brahmins do not eat any fish or meat. Those who eat meat prefer lamb. Beef is strictly forbidden for the Hindus.¹ The Mohammedans in Bengal eat meat (though very little), but in their cases pork, ham, and bacon are prohibited. In any case, even those Hindus who eat meat do it only occasionally. All Hindus or even the Buddhists are not strict vegetarians. The majority of the high-caste Hindus, the Brahmins, are vegetarians, but one-seventh of the total population of India belongs to the lowest castes, who eat meat.

In cities those who work in offices eat

¹ Some Hindus do not eat any meat except the flesh of lamb sacrificed before the god or goddess.

a little lunch after one o'clock. The English habit of enjoying a cup of afternoon tea has found a place in large cities. Calcutta has several hundred tea shops. The evening meal is a hearty one. The time for this meal varies in different homes between seven and ten o'clock, or later. There is a repetition of almost the same items as in breakfast, with a few changes here and there. One important change in the bill of fare can be noticed in case of certain families. Instead of repeating a course of rice (the morning dish) they prefer hand-made, flat, round loaves of bread, usually made very thin in Bengal—about half a dozen making a thickness of one inch. In the provinces farther north people prefer thick bread. *Roti* *rooti*, *chāpāti*, as it is called, differs from *loochi* or *puri*, which is richer. *Loochi* or *puri* is a kind of flour cake fried in *ghee* or melted butter. In some Bengal homes people prefer *rooti* (hand-made bread) or *luchi* (thin flour cake). Fruits

are also eaten by people who can afford them, in the course of the morning or evening meal. Sour soup and pickles form very important items of the menu. Curd is another item which figures prominently on the menus in Hindu homes.

In matters of dress we are very fortunate in India. People in peninsular, or southern, India, do not require any heavy winter clothing. Only those who live in the northern part of India, especially in the mountain regions on the border of the Himalayas, need heavy winter clothing. In the plains, men, women, and children use light clothing almost all the year round, excepting in the two or three winter months when they use either heavy cotton or light woolen clothing. During winter months, in Calcutta and other parts of northern India, we wear either a shawl or a woolen coat or shirt. The common dress consists of a piece of white cotton cloth, five yards by one and one-half yards.

This is folded round and fastened in the waist like a skirt. This piece of cloth may be either bordered with different colors or have no borders at all.

Girls and women wear cloth of the same material as the men. Some women prefer cloths with wider borders, and the men use the thinner borders only. Among the Hindus, older men and widows wear all-white cloths without any borders.¹ In the case of the latter, this style of cloth serves as a mark of widowhood. On special occasions women wear colored cloths. Silk dress is worn only on special occasions and at the time of worship. No head-dress (like turban, cap, or hat) is worn by the people of Bengal. It is a mistake to assume that all Hindus wear turbans. At least forty million people of Bengal do not wear any head-dress. Married women and widows use part of their garments in covering the head in a manner like that of

¹The riot of colors in their dress is seldom to be noticed in Bengal.

the Hebrews of ancient times. Some of them draw it farther down so that it may serve as a veil also.

A kind of loose shirt (with wide or narrow sleeves) or a short coat called *kortā* (or *jāmā*) may be the second piece of clothing. The third piece is another small shirt of cotton measuring between two and three yards in length and between thirty and thirty-six inches in width. This is known as *chudder* or *urāni*. The first and the third are the two essential parts of a Bengali Hindu's robe. They are seamless.

Leather shoes are worn mostly in cities. Many people wear half or full slippers without any socks. There are some who use socks in winter. Men use a special style of wooden sandal which has either a knob or a strap to hold the foot. The suit of clothes which the Hindus wear is washed almost every day in cold water. Poor people wash their clothes three or four times a month with soap and water.

Only in cities people send their clothes to the laundry or "the washerman's house," as it is called in our part of India. There is no laundry run by the Chinese in India. The majority of the Chinese who live in India are either excellent carpenters or good shoemakers. Hindu women very seldom wear any shoes.

The Hindu housewife is not troubled with big washings every week, like the housewife in the States. In many homes self-help is practised as regards washing. Every adult member of the family washes his or her own clothing. Children's clothing is taken care of by others. No machinery is used by washermen in India. In recent years a large number of washermen's agencies, which go by the name of laundry, have been introduced into Calcutta. In the country when people bathe in the tanks they either return to their homes wearing their wet clothes or change for a dry one at the bathing-*ghāt* (steps).



BANYAN TREE IN MADRAS.

CHAPTER VII

IN TOWN AND COUNTRY

NINE-TENTHS of the people of India live in villages. Smoking is very common among the rural population. People carry their *hookā*, or hubble-bubble, when they go around the village. Smoking among women is not common. In the villages older people meet at the *baitak-hānā* or *ātchālā* (parlor) of a friend's house and play cards, chess, or dice. Sometimes these games are continued late into the night. Card-playing is more common among younger people. I was never a good card-player, though I remember that my sisters played the game well. *Chandimandap*, or the open thatched hall, where the text of the Chandi (Hindu popular Scripture) is recited on ceremonial occasions in the village, is also used

as a club. Such a place corresponds to the bathing-steps of a pond or tank where women meet and discuss country politics. Boys, too, have their clubs. They meet on the village opens, in the houses of friends, or in the mango groves.

During my boyhood days, I heard a great deal about the methods adopted by village schoolboys to tease their *pandits* or teachers.' In addition to the small tuition for his services, the village schoolmaster expected gifts in kind from his pupils' homes. Those who had plenty never grudged such gifts. On ceremonial occasions (like marriage, *srāddha*, or the rites for the dead), the teacher received a good share of the gifts. Tobacco was one of the articles which the schoolmaster most needed, all the year round. So he was constantly insisting on one student or another bringing him tobacco. Not only that, he ordered his scholars to prepare the tobacco for him during school hours.

The young students took hours in pre-

paring the tobacco. They did not like the job at all, but had to submit to the rule laid down by the schoolmaster. One of the ingenious students devised a means through which they could free themselves from the tyrannical practice.

They got together and brought some red pepper from their homes. The next time one of them was asked to prepare the tobacco, he mixed the red pepper solution with the water in the *hookā*. As soon as the *pandit* started to smoke, he felt a terrible burning sensation in his mouth and throat. He was horrified and began to cough incessantly. Then he let the water come out of the *hookā* and discovered the plot that had been made against the *guru mohāshaya* (sir teacher). This was a common practice repeated in other schools. There would be always some students bold or naughty enough to hazard such a trick, even at the risk of being expelled from school.

Boys in town, as well as in the country,

are very clean in their habits. They bathe every day and wash their mouth with some home-made "dental powder" or "danton" (stick from the branch of a niem-tree which is made into a kind of brush by chewing one end). Boys of the Brahmin caste perform their *pūjās* (worship by repeating the *gāyatri* and the *sandhyā* texts in the mornings and the evenings). These are the preliminary items in every morning's program. They cannot eat their breakfast until they have performed these acts.

When trains pass through country districts one may notice many villagers of the neighborhoods—men, women, and children, standing by the railroad lines and watching with great interest the engine and the cars rush past. Miles of fields of rice and wheat give a chance to observe the habits of the farmers in their fields. The quality of the cattle employed in farming is not always good. The Hindu farmers keep few animals. The Moham-

medans, on the other hand, keep some poultry and a few animals. They have no objection to eating meat, except pork or ham.

On most of the railroad lines of India, there are three classes: the first, the second, and the third. On certain lines, in addition to these three, there is an "intermediate" class between the second and the third. The third class, which has the cheapest fare (about a cent and a half a mile), carries more passengers than any other. The first- and second-class cars can be compared with the first and the third classes of England and the first and the second of France. Many railroad stations have elevated platforms. The third-class passengers suffer most for want of good drinking-water. Sometimes they are packed like sardines in cars for twelve or fifteen hours. At the wayside stations appear the sweet-vendor, the tea-seller, and the *pani pandé* (the water-carrier for the Hindus), with his bucket, and the

bhistee (for the Mohammedan) with his leather bag prepared out of a goat's skin. Unlike American railroads, on very few trains can one go from one end of the train to the other. There are dining-cars attached to the important trains where meals are served, mostly for European passengers.

Music, in recent years, has not made much progress in India. For lack of support and cultivation, it has languished in certain parts, though there are some very well trained masters. Popular music in the form of Sankirtans (religious singing and dancing), Kathakathās (the singing in the course of religious readings and recitals), the singing of the *bāuls*, *kirtaniās*, etc., has kept alive the taste for music. Music (both vocal and instrumental), however, is about to enter into an era of new life. For some time it was confined to the professional classes (like dancing in which only professional dancers participate). Notwithstanding the professionalism, it is

wrong to assume that the people do not sing or encourage singing. Religious singing has always played an important part in Hindu life and there is no restriction against singing hymns by men, women, or children. Social dancing, as it is understood in the West, cannot be found anywhere in India except in the aboriginal communities.

There are about a dozen varieties of stringed musical instruments. *Rāgas* (with their feminine *Rāginis*—personified notes of melodies) characterize Indian music. They are “certain melodic schemes based on various modes and keys, differentiated by the sequence and prominence of particular notes.” A point of considerable interest to the foreigner is that particular *Rāgas* and *Rāginis* are required to be sung at particular hours of the day, and the initiated really feel dissatisfied if the proper time is not chosen for its corresponding tune. Certain powers are also ascribed to certain *Rāgas*—or melody

types—*i. e.*, the bringing down of rains, the breaking forth of fire, etc.

Music is taught and learned by the ear. That makes a good ear and good memory. A comparison with the music of the Western World is not possible. Indian melody has attained “a greater complexity and elaboration than its Western sister;” but there is “no such thing as harmony, or practically none, only the keynote, singly or in combination with dominant and subdominant being in accompanying songs or filling out instrumental music.”¹ The system of notation “can only record the bare outlines of any musical scheme because of the apparently endless profusion of cadences,” which adorn Hindu music and lead to improvisation rather than reproduction.

Here is a translation of one of the most popular national songs of our part of India, composed by one of our great poets

¹ Mrs. P. Chaudhuri's (Srimati Indira Devi, niece of Rabindranath Tagore) Article, “Music in India.”

and dramatists, Dwijendra Lāl Roy. The homes and streets of Bengal used to be filled with its music about fifteen years ago. In my boyhood days along with others, I learned the tune by listening again and again:

O my Banga,¹ O my mother, O my nurse, O
country mine,
Why dishevelled are thy tresses, lustreless thy
look divine?
For thy seat this lowly dusty, for raiment this
thy battered gear,
When seventy million children call thee fondly,
“Mother Dear.”
(There’s no pain, and there’s no shame, and
there’s no grief, no sorrow’s brand,
When seventy million voices sing in chorus,
“Motherland.”) *Chorus.*

Here arose Lord Buddha great, who opened
Nirvan’s gates above,
Half the world still kneel before Him, worship-
ping in fervent love,
King Asoka spread his deeds from Kandhar to
th’ azure main,
Art thou not their country, Mother? Of these
gods thy holy fame.

¹ Bengal.

Chorus

Once thy ships sailed freely o'er the waters of
the eastern seas,

Once thy sons o'er China, Japan, Thibet, led
their learned lore,

Is it thus and is it thou in rags and weeping
evermore?

* * * * *

Though thy light divine has vanished, and thy
days are dark as night,

Clouds will pass away and glory shine in lustre
fresh and bright.

CHAPTER VIII

A CALCUTTA MARKET

IN my boyhood days, I often used to accompany my father to the market. If you ever go to India, visit at least some of the markets. One is sure to find there not only the produce of the Indian farmers, weavers, potters, blacksmiths, tin-smiths, carpenters, and others, but there at least one will come across people from all classes. Even some of the richest people who can command scores of servants will be found visiting the stores in the markets.

Our house in Calcutta was very close to the largest Indian market in the city. I had, therefore, many opportunities to observe the life of the market-place. Telephones are scarce in such a market, even to-day. One cannot order articles over

the telephone and have them delivered at the home. Very few homes in Calcutta have telephones. Once in a while I remember that my father used to send orders by writing which some servant took to the store or to the market.

Nootan Bāzār, or the New Market of the Indian section of the city, occupies about thirty acres of land. It is the property of a millionaire family belonging to the "gold merchant" or Swarnabanik caste. Their house is known in Calcutta as the "Marble Palace." Several hundred beggars, *sādhus*, and other persons, such as the blind, lame, etc., have their meals once a day in the charity of this house. This is one type of Hindu charity. Those who have must give to the poor. The house of the Malliks, as they are called, can afford to feed several hundred people every day because they receive from every stall in their market a regular contribution in kind. One who sells potatoes makes a gift of potatoes. The keeper of the rice store

provides rice. In this way each contributes something toward the feeding of the poor. Such feeding of the poor is common on festival days as well as on special occasions like marriage and *Srāddha* (the sacrificial rites for the dead). When Queen Victoria and King Edward died, several thousands of poor people were fed on the streets.

Almost everything can be bought at the Nootan Bāzār. It has open places, covered quadrangles, and stalls and shops of different proportions. We do not have "fish-markets" and "meat-markets," such as are so familiar to me in the United States. There are meat stalls and groceries outside of the markets, but they are usually small stores. One can always tell the nearness of a market from the noise which he can hear from a distance. Thousands of people come to this "New Market" every day to buy their food. Vegetables, fish, meat, and fruits are bought daily by the great majority of the

people. There is no ice-chest in any Hindu home. Consequently few articles of food are preserved except in the winter months. Some of these articles are hawked every morning by small vendors. They come to one's doors and the women of the household can have their choice. In certain stores the prices are fixed; but in others, especially in the smaller ones, bargaining goes on, creating the noise so characteristic of the Indian market-place. On rare occasions, buyer and seller may even come to blows in their disputes over the prices or the quality of the articles sold. The section set apart for the keepers of the fish-stalls is the most noisy in Calcutta markets. Wherever there is a great noise, that place is usually described as the fish-market. Fishermen and their wives keep the stalls. They use big earthen bowls filled with water, over which they place planks to sit upon, and so, with some of their fish still living, make sales to their customers.

As a rule, farmers do not come to the Calcutta markets. They sell their produce wholesale to retailers called *forés*, who bring their foodstuffs to the markets either in bullock carts or in large baskets.

In the country, the case is different. There are certain fixed days once or twice a week when farmers, weavers, and potters come from the adjoining villages to the *hāt* or market-place. They spend the major part of the day there and return home in the evening. But in Calcutta markets one can buy anything he likes up to nine or ten o'clock at night. A large number of the vegetable and fruit stalls keep their articles for show in big baskets, or spread them on a piece of mat or canvas. Some have raised platforms of bamboo or wood on which they keep their goods for show. They have scales, and use cast-iron weights, which are usually correct. One may notice, occasionally, a little defect in their scales on account of which the customers may be cheated, but

such small tricks are very seldom practised deliberately in Calcutta.

The articles purchased are not always wrapped with paper or put in paper bags. Only grocers use paper and canvas bags for rice, flour, sugar, split peas, and such products. People who go to market either carry a basket in which they may place several empty vessels to be filled with oil, *ghee* (melted butter), or molasses, or gather their purchases in a piece of hand-woven cloth called *gāmchā* (towel), measuring forty by forty-five inches. The *gāmchā* serves as a bag as well as a towel. During the rainy season those who keep their stalls in the open either hoist a big umbrella made of bamboo and dried leaves, or erect a kind of temporary cane-work shed under which they can take shelter from the heavy rains and the scorching rays of the sun.

I have seen some of the markets of America where farmers come once a week to sell their produce. They are very simi-

lar to the Indian *hats* (*a* is pronounced as the “ a ” in “ last ”) in the country towns. People in India eat a great deal of rice. Whenever they buy rice or flour in large quantities, *i. e.*, forty or eighty pounds, the stores undertake to send it to the buyer's home. They employ attendants who carry the rice or flour in large sacks containing between forty and one hundred and sixty pounds. The carriers place a padded cushion on their head or an improvised short, low turban which protects their head from their load. Porters at railroad stations carry their heavy baggage in a similar way. Carrying loads on one's back is rare in India.

CHAPTER IX

MARRIAGE PRELIMINARIES

MARRIAGE ceremonies are performed in the homes. Unlike the Christian countries, no marriage intentions are filed previous to the ceremony. Hindu marriages are not registered. There is no divorce in Hindu society. A woman once married is always married. A man can marry as many times as he likes, but a woman cannot. The idea of *sati* or *suttee* (devoted wife) grew out of idealization of married life, and especially a wife's love for her husband.

Courtship is not allowed in Hindu society. Far back in the history of India, when early marriage was not the rule, we come across accounts of courtship in our classical literature. In ancient Hindu society, young men married at the end of

their period of study in the forest schools. They must have reached the age of thirty in those days. In free India, young men could choose their life partners.

After the days of India's subjection to foreign powers, several centuries ago, the social customs became more and more rigid. The Hindu lawgivers fixed, at last, ten years as the age of marriage for girls. They also thought that they would be able to preserve the spirit of harmony and unity of action by introducing very young girls into a joint family. Their aim was the interest of the joint family, to which all other individual interests were to be subordinated. Girls, married at the early age of eight or ten years, grew into the love of other members of their husbands' families. The practice of early marriage, no doubt, contributed to the increase in the number of child widows. Though child widows can get married now, very few such marriages take place.

There was a time when social injustice

in the form of different kinds of excommunication was exercised against all violators of the marriage laws. One who failed to have his daughter married at the age of ten could not get any invitation to dine or participate in the social events of his own caste. His washerman and barber were forbidden to wash his clothes and shave him. Those were great hardships in the days when people did not own their own razors and could not wash their own clothes. But times have changed. Excommunication cannot be so effective in these days. Some of the girls, however few their number may be, are going to schools. A few are attending college and devoting themselves to teaching and other forms of social work. The number of child marriages and child widows is lessening.

Marriages can be arranged only among members of the same caste. One who belongs to the goldsmith caste cannot marry any one belonging to the blacksmith caste.

Though marriages between the richest and the poorest members of the same caste are possible, the division of the Hindu society into numerous castes has always been a perplexing problem. Observance of caste rules, food rules, and touch rules have been possible in self-contained communities. Hindu almanacs prescribe so many rules relating to food, travel, etc., that if one wants to observe them all it becomes hard to live. A few marriages outside the caste have been solemnized in recent years by some bold reformers. All my sisters were married outside the caste in which they were born. Such marriages outside the caste and consequently outside the Orthodox Hindu societies can be solemnized only according to the rites of the Brahmo and the Arya Somajes, which do not recognize caste.

The professional match-maker plays an important part in most marriage negotiations. Sometimes the parties are directly approached, but the *ghatak* (feminine

ghatkee) or match-maker is very much in evidence in Hindu homes which have marriageable sons and daughters. They are ceaseless in their attempts, and go from house to house selecting and offering suitable brides and grooms who can easily be led to the marriage altar. Sometimes it takes months to come to a final conclusion. Members of both parties arrange meetings at which they inspect the boy and the girl and discuss the financial part of the program, including dowry, presents, entertainment of guests, public gifts, etc. If they come to an agreement they consult the horoscopes of both parties. They must have complementary qualities in order to make a successful marriage. Horoscopes are cast by astrologers either a few months after the birth of a child or later. The agreement in horoscopes is essential. My father and mother never put any faith in horoscopes. So I did not have any horoscope which I could consult to guide my life. I remember I had a friend who

was absolutely dependent on his horoscope and tried to mould his life as described in that chart (a long sheet of yellow paper).

The *āshirvād* (or blessing) ceremony closes the marriage deal. The ceremony may be said to correspond somewhat to the engagement, as it is called in the West. But it differs from the engagement in one respect at least. Like marriage, it is a social affair. Friends and relatives must be present to bless the prospective bride and groom. Paddy (rice with husk), green grass, etc., are applied to the forehead, the ear is touched with honey. A ring, necklace, gold watch, or gold coins are presented to the engaged parties. Many a proposal for marriage comes to nought on account of disagreement regarding the question of dowry or presents. Of course, these are not compulsory and there are some who are awaking to a sense of injustice committed in the name of one of the sacred relations of human life. In poor families which have a number of

daughters it is hard for the parents to supply dowry for all. In our part of India, Hindu society has suffered much through the operation of this unjust system which has commercialized marriage and injured family life.

Marriage is compulsory in the case of all girls in the Orthodox Hindu society. India is a country where there is an excess of males. Still in certain parts of India, and among certain communities, the men have to provide the dowry. In our part of the country, the girl's party provide it. Within the Orthodox Hindu society, therefore, no woman can be an unmarried woman. But the lot of the girls in poor families is very hard. Girls are not married to gods of temples in our part of India. It is a custom in certain sections of the south, which have also very stringent rules regarding caste, and especially the untouchables, who are not allowed to walk through certain streets and sidewalks. No such custom prevails in Bengal.

CHAPTER X

A HINDU WEDDING

THE day of wedding has at last arrived. The ceremony is to be performed in the evening about "the cowdust" (*godhuli*) moment, as it is designated by the Hindu compilers of almanacs. At this time, the cows return to their homes from their pastures after raising a great deal of dust on the way. From the early afternoon hours the bride's home presents a beautiful spectacle. It is decorated with evergreens, flowers, festoons, and flags. Elaborate arrangements have been made to keep the whole house well lighted. The atmosphere is sweet with perfume and flowers galore, but one can hardly notice the bride. We have a very common saying which is on the lips of everybody during the marriage

week. "One who is to be married is not much in evidence, while the neighbors and relatives seem to have lost their sleep."

The case is almost the same at the groom's house, but the signs of joy and merriment so characteristic of such auspicious occasions are more in evidence at the bride's house. Children in their very best clothes are seen strolling, running, and playing. Some are busy gossiping about one hundred and one trivial things, and all are on the tiptoe of expectation for the groom's arrival. At regular intervals a quartet of musicians play on their flutes and drums. The music of the *sanai* (flute) has its peculiar charm. At the entrance to the bride's home, stand two pitchers filled with water beside two banana-tree stalks which form the decorations, indicating the auspicious character of the occasion. You may also find a few beggars standing near the entrance or squatting on the street, awaiting alms.

Inside the house one can smell the

savory meal which is being prepared for the guests. Several cooks have been kept busy from the early hours of the morning in preparing the elaborate meal to be served to the two classes of guests—the *barjātras* and the *kanyājātras* (or the groom's and bride's parties). It takes about one or two weeks to invite all the guests. Near relatives and dear friends expect a personal invitation to the wedding to be extended by the father or the guardian of the parties.

In this Hindu wedding at Calcutta, the bride's people have made arrangements for entertaining 'about one thousand guests. One can imagine how big an affair it is. Some of the relatives of the bride have been visiting the bride's family several days before the marriage. Just before the day preceding the marriage, there were preliminary functions, in connection with which several hundreds of people were fed. On one occasion the groom's party sent presents to the bride two days before the

marriage. About fifty people (mostly servants and maids from the homes of friends and relatives) carried those presents on their shoulders or heads from the groom's house to the home of the bride. They marched in procession through the streets. They were all dressed in loose garments which had been dyed pink or light red. Marriage is an occasion on which the red tint is very much in evidence. Invitations to weddings are usually printed on red stationery and addressed with red ink. Such preliminaries take up a considerable portion of the time of the two parties besides planning, entertaining, and receiving presents from friends.

“The groom is coming! The groom is coming!” So shout the children. Their cry passes from one to the other until it is heard within the house.

With the sound of the playing of the band, the approach of the groom and his party is announced even to the inner apartments of the home where the bride is

sitting on a carpet or bed awaiting the one great moment of her life. Women are to be seen making toward the terrace, the windows and the verandas of the house to catch a glimpse of the groom and the bridal party. At last the groom arrives in an open carriage (a landau) drawn by several horses. Right behind his carriage there is a long row of carriages in which are seated the guests of the groom's party. As soon as the groom's carriage stops opposite the bride's door, the bride's father or guardian, followed by a few friends, advances toward the carriage to welcome them.

There was a time when the bride's father used to carry the groom in his arms like a nurse and set him before the gathering of friends and relatives who, by that time, had assembled at the *Sabhā* (meeting-place). But this practice is now almost obsolete.

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So the groom is conducted by the bride's parents to the *bibāha sabhā* (or marriage

parlor, or meeting-place). On the groom's arrival, in the meantime, women of the household have been blowing their conch shells and making the sound "*ulu, ulu, ulu*,"—a wedding greeting. The band is playing some wedding march and the quartet has started its peculiar Hindu music.

The groom is dressed in dark red silk *dhuti*, a shirt of similar material, and a *urāni* (or wrapper) to match. Sometimes grooms wear trousers (silk or velvet) and *chāpkāns* or *āchkāns* (light long coats), but in that case they have to change for the red silk *dhuti*, during the religious part of the ceremony.

Following the welcome of the groom, every member of the party is garlanded and given a small bouquet of flowers. Pān, or prepared betel in *lchilis* (or banana-leaf cases), is then served to all. Tobacco in water pipes (or *hookās*) is also served to those who wish to smoke. The guests, meanwhile, may be enjoying some

very good music. Professional or amateur singers entertain them.

The wedding guests have a unique position in Hindu society. If they are not well received by the bride's people, they may leave in a body,—an exodus which happens once in a while on such occasions. The Hindu moralists described an *atithi* or guest as the god of all; just as Agni (fire) is the god of the Brahmins, the Brahmin is the god of all other castes, and the husband is the god of the wife.

In a few moments, the bride's father or guardian appears before the assembly, and with folded palms asks the permission of all present to take the groom away from their midst into the inner apartments (*andar mahal*). There a place is usually set apart for the religious part of the ceremony. As a preliminary to the religious part which is in charge of the priest, the women go through a ceremony more social than religious. The assembled guests having expressed their consent, the groom is

led to the place where the women perform the *stree āchāra* or the rites of women. It is usually held in the courtyard or on the terrace. The bride and the groom stand on a piece of stone and the women (only married women are allowed to take part in the program) go around and around with lighted lamps and gifts. They blow the conch and shout the “*ulu, ulu, ulu.*” A richly colored and ornamented cork hat is placed on the head of the groom and a similar tiara is placed on the head of the bride. Then they make the bride sit on a wooden board held by two or three young men, who are near relatives, and who take her around and around the groom seven times. After completing the *pradakshin* (circumambulation) which is known as *sātpāk* (or seven twists), they raise high the seat until the heads of the groom and the bride are on the same level. A piece of colored cloth is then spread above their heads and they are asked by the assembled women to look at each other. In some

cases, it may be that they then look at each other for the first time in life. For they have not met before this occasion—which is called *subha drishti*, or the moment of auspicious look. The bride usually draws the veil over her face most of the time and that accounts for her not having looked at the face of the groom all this time. This part of the ceremony is enjoyed most by women, who can laugh and joke to their heart's desire.

The religious part of the Hindu wedding is the most significant. It puts the seal on the marriage bond. Before the sacred fire lighted in a small hole or fireplace, the groom repeats the marriage *mantra* (sacred texts). Hindu marriage is a sacrament and not a contract. In this it resembles the Roman Catholic idea of marriage. The religious part, therefore, is essential. The ends of the dark-red silk garment of bride and groom are tied at the end as symbolic of the union. They also exchange garlands. At the conclu-

sion of the ceremony, they are allowed to retire to the bridal room, where they are taken in charge by women who try to keep them awake all night. The bride and the groom are also allowed to eat for the first time during the day at the end of their period of fast of twenty-four hours. Thus the seriousness as well as the joy of the affair is always emphasized by the ceremonies.

Let us now return to the guests. While we were busy observing the religious part of the ceremony, the guests were asked to retire to the dining-rooms, or terraces, which have been converted into dining-halls. A large canopy over the terraces has given it a tent-like appearance. The place is scrupulously clean, though it lacks the table, chairs, linens, silverware, and crockery that are the usual paraphernalia of dining-halls in the West. The entire floor is covered with long rows of square mats, opposite which have been placed sections of banana leaves with some earthen-

ware glasses, cups, and small plates. The leaves are covered with at least ten or twelve courses. After a short while cooks and waiters are to be seen going around and repeating some of the courses. People eat to their heart's content and express their satisfaction at the arrangements made. They praise the quality of the food, and finally rise from their seats offering a prayer (either silent or expressed) for the newly married:

“May the gods bless the couple! May they be happy and prosperous! May they keep up the good name of the fathers!”

The guests all rejoice at the end of the sumptuous feast and return to their homes with the memories of a happy wedding enshrined in their hearts. Such is a Hindu wedding.

CHAPTER XI

HINDU TEMPLES

EARLY in life Hindu mothers, grandmothers, and aunts see that the girls in the family are trained in the practice of their religion. This is usually called Hindu *dharma* (or Hinduism). The Hindus claim that their religion is the eternal religion and the *rishis* (sages), who were the forerunners of their religion were *trikāla jña* (or knowers of time in its triple aspects,—the past, the present and the future). I may mention here to avoid any confusion on the part of the readers, that the religion of the Hindus is not Buddhism. A man from India is not necessarily a Buddhist as he is usually supposed to be by many in the West. Certain Buddhist teachings, however, have been recognized in Hinduism.

The temples in villages and the family sanctuaries in connection with many Hindu homes take the place of the Sunday schools in America. The religious education of the boys rests with the male members and the priests, but the mother and the other women of the household exert great influence in moulding a child's religious life. Hindu religious life at least for the majority of women and children is ritualistic. A large number of details have to be attended to in connection with the family worship, such as flowers have to be gathered, sandal-wood paste has to be prepared, incense has to be burned, the food offering has to be arranged, and the metal dishes of the sanctuary have to be cleaned. Besides the practical side, the theoretical part is usually left in charge of priests who arrange *Kathakathās*,—readings from Scriptures. On such occasions the members of the family with all their friends gather in front of the sanctuary or temple door. They listen most at-

tentively to all readings from popular Scriptures (*Purānas*).

I remember the family sanctuary of my uncle. When we were very young, my sisters and I liked to watch the morning or evening service at the family sanctuary. The priest, Jogin Thakur, a Brahmin, used to come twice daily. Even now I can see him enter the sanctuary with bowed head. He leaves his slippers at the foot of the staircase leading to the sanctuary. As soon as he gets in, he finds all the offerings (such as food, flowers, and incense) well arranged in metal or stone cups and plates. The place is full of the sweet smell of the incense burning on special incense-holders. Fresh flowers, *bel* or *bilva* (wood-apple) leaves, sandalwood paste, are in their usual places. A cup of milk or cold drink in summer (consisting of some kind of fruit syrup, watermelon, wood-apple, mango) occupies a prominent place among the offerings. On one plate is a quantity of uncooked

rice. On another, there are small pieces of fruits (apples, bananas, mangoes, oranges, pineapples). Another still bears sweets (*sandesh*) and light sugar cakes (*bātāsā*).

The priest begins the worship by ringing a small brass bell. If I happen to be there I take up a gong (of the shape of a tambourine) and begin striking it with a piece of strong stick. With the noise of *kānsar* (gong) and *ghantā* (bell), the worship proceeds. All through the worship the priest utters *mantras* (texts) in Sanskrit which I cannot understand very much (not having yet fully learned the language of the gods). He then goes through the process of fanning the god with a folded handkerchief and offering food and drink by means of the other hand, while he is ringing the bell all the time with his left hand. He usually carries a *gāmchā* (towel) with him. Into that he pours the contents of the different plates of offerings. He may leave a part

of the offerings as *prosād* for the worshippers. When he comes out of the sanctuary he meets me and other boys and girls who have by that time assembled there. He stops and talks with us and offers each one either fruits or sweets. All the children are happy, for they have had something to eat. Some kneel down in front of the sanctuary and bow their heads in salutation to the god who is the preserver of all life.

The evening service is more important and interesting. It is usually a service of five lighted lamps—the *pancha pradip*. On a brass stand are attached five small lamps. The hollow of each lamp contains a small wick which is soaked in several drops of pure *ghee* (butter melted), for the gods cannot be offered any oil. The priest comes and takes up the bell in his left hand and turns the *pancha pradip* around and around with his right hand. The worshippers gather near the sanctuary door and stand watching the ceremony

with folded palms. There is a sense of absorption in certain faces which is noticed often on the occasion of the vesper service or *ārati*, as the evening service is usually called. The last item in the service of worship consists of tucking the god into his bed and drawing the mosquito curtain. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the worshippers either prostrate themselves in a kneeling posture or bow their heads again and again, touching the ground. Women and girls take one end of their garments and pass it round their neck when they are in an attitude of devotion.

Girls before their early teens are taught many acts of worship in the course of which they offer prayers to the gods for good things of life; for husbands like the hero-god (of the epic *Rāmāyana*) Sri Rāmchandra. They pray for strength that they may be good and pure wives and mothers like Sitā, Sāvitrī, Draupadi, Danayanti—the heroines of the great

epics of India. In these simple acts of worship they do not have any priests. The girls sometimes mould the symbols of their gods with their own hands. Boys of the higher castes are also required to go through certain ceremonies. Some are initiated into the cult of the twice-born men at the age of ten or later. They shave their heads, observe the vow of silence, do not look at any woman, fast, beg, and carry a beggar's bag and a stick before they receive the *mantra* (or the words of spiritual culture) from their *guru* (preceptor). I witnessed many such ceremonies in my young days; but, as my parents were not of the orthodox profession, I did not have to go through any one of these rites.

The Vratas like Punyipooker, Senjuti, and others, are observed in Hindu homes by girls in summer and autumn. In our liberal religious groups we have practices which have certain resemblances to the older ones. Here is one which I quote



KESHUB CHUNDER SEN

The great Hindu social and religious reformer (1838-1884)
Leader of the Brahmo Samaj movement in India.

from *Nava Samhitā*, written by our great leader, Keshub Chunder Sen:

Unto boys and girls pictorial lessons are of great value. They serve to impress on tender and susceptible hearts the great truths of religion and morality and awaken and educate the best sentiments of the young in a most effective manner. Therefore, while young, between the ages of ten and twelve years, boys and girls shall take the vow of Chitra Sādhan or pictorial training, and be educated by illustrative drawings for the period of a week. These drawings shall be simple and rough and shall be executed on the house floor by means of white paint made of chalk or rice powder mixed with water. The lessons shall be given and the drawings executed by the mother or an elder sister, or some other female guardian regularly every afternoon.

The candidates shall be taught either in groups or each individually. On the first day the children shall put on new cloth and a flower garland shall be put around the neck. They shall enter the sanctuary led by the mother and reverently bow before the Lord, their heads touching the

ground. The mother shall then lead them on to the place of Sāadhan (training), and begin the ceremony thus:

All shall unitedly say, "Glory to the God of the young, to the loving god of boys and girls be glory evermore. To our dear heavenly Father and Mother we give glory."

The candidate shall say, "This holy vow is for my true welfare. God bless His child!"

The mother shall first draw figure 1, and the child shall place flowers over it and say, "One God, one Faith, one Family, one Scripture, one Salvation."

Over the second figure representing the flag of the New Dispensation (the religion of harmony and synthesis with the lotus, the cross, the trident, and the symbolic word "om" inscribed on it)¹ the child shall similarly scatter flowers and say, "Victory to the New Dispensation (the religion of the Spirit)."

The third figure shall represent the map of Asia, Europe, Africa and America and the child in honoring it shall say, "On earth peace and good-will and among the four continents unity."

¹ The symbols of all the great world religions.

Then the child shall pass on to the other drawings on the floor, placing fresh flowers on each, and saying as follows:

“*Figure of a money-bag*—More precious is truth than earthly treasure.

“*Sun and moon*—Bright like the sun may my righteousness be, and tender like the moon my love.

“*River*—Like the river, may my life flow on, giving the water of life to thousands and scattering plenty and prosperity on all sides.

“*Sandal-tree*—Like the sandal-tree, may I give perfume to the enemy who smites and persecutes me.

“*Mountain*—May my faith be firm as a rock and my character immovable as the Himalaya.”

If the candidate be a girl, the following drawings shall be added in her case:

“*Necklace*—As necklace adorns the neck, may chastity be my necklace.

“*Bangles*—May charity be the diamond ornament of my hands.

“*Veil*—May modesty be my veil.”

The candidate shall bow saying, “Great is this vow; the Lord make it fruitful.”

After the ceremony is over, the draw-

ings shall be washed and effaced, and the same practice shall be repeated daily for a week. On the last day the candidate shall say at the conclusion of the ceremony, "Peace, Peace, Peace. He shall feed those children who are his best friends and companions, give honor to his parents and elders, and give alms to the poor, and food to cattle, and birds, and insects." ¹

¹*New Samhita*, by Keshub Chunder Sen, Calcutta, Brahmo Tract Society.

CHAPTER XII

DOMESTIC CUSTOMS

THE scarcity of good milk in our part of India prevents the growth of healthy child life. The supply of the best quality of milk is very limited in large cities. I remember how much trouble my parents had with the milkmen or milkmaids who supplied us with milk. There are very few dairies in India which are managed scientifically. Many artificial milk-food companies have a large market in India. Mellin's, Horlick's, Allenbury's, Benger's, Nestle's, and a host of other brands appear in India. Sometimes their products are used by villagers. They advertise extensively in all Indian papers.

Good milk produced in the farms in the country districts is available in certain places. In the United States milk is sold

in bottles. We seldom saw any bottled milk in Calcutta until my twelfth year. A few well-equipped dairy farms have been opened in recent years and are selling bottled and sealed milk. There was a time, about twenty years ago, when many milkmen around Calcutta diluted their milk with water. When my father discovered the fact, he bought a lactometer and cautioned the milkman that on the discovery of any trace of water the milk would be refused or thrown away. I remember how eagerly I watched the lactometer test applied to milk supplied to our house. On the complaint of many residents of Calcutta, the health department decided to put a stop to the practice of milk adulteration. Milk inspectors were placed at every important railroad station and street corner. They stopped milkmen, examined the milk, and if they found any water in the milk-cans, they emptied the can into the street. The scene was common in my boyhood days.

There is a story told about the folly of milk adulteration. A milkman had to stop every day beside a tank on the way to the homes of his customers. He would go down the steps of the *ghāt* and fill his two cans half-and-half with milk and water. On a tall tree beside the tank, there lived a monkey that watched the action of the milkman every day. After six months, the milkman saved enough money (almost half of the amount he received from the sale of milk) to buy more cows. So one day he counted carefully the amount he had saved and put the coins in a long cloth bag which he wound around his waist. (This is one of the ways in which people carry their money in India.) As soon as he approached the tank he took off his purse and placed it at the base of the tree and went toward the *ghāt* (steps) with his can in order to fill it with water. He did not know that he had been watched almost every day by a monkey that sat on the branch of a tree and followed his every

movement. The sight of the money-bag made the monkey smile. Slowly he descended from the tree, took the money-bag, unloosened the purse-string and with a few strides came to the edge of the bank quite unnoticed. He emptied the purse of all its contents and climbed up the tree after leaving the bag exactly at the spot where he had found it. The milkman on his return discovered the empty bag. He was furious and began to curse the unknown thief. Suddenly he caught sight of the monkey, making grimaces at him. Whereupon the milkman realized the monkey had played a trick on him. But the monkey opened his mouth and informed him that the money had not been stolen at all. Pointing at the tank, he added that it was left exactly at the place where it really belonged, for the milkman had his can filled half with water. Therefore, half of the money from the sale of the milk mixed with water belonged to the bank which supplied the water. It is hard

for people who want to make immediate profit to see how they injure themselves by trying to deceive others.

For cooking purposes, we use mustard oil in our part of India. *Ghee*, or melted butter, is also used. In southern India people use cocoanut oil and gingeley oil for cooking. Some of the very strict vegetarian sects use a great deal of butter and milk. One of the happy-go-lucky sects of India is said to be the originators of a proverb "*Rinam kritwa ghritam pibet*": "Drink melted butter even by running into debt," or "Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die." My mother came from a vegetarian family, and we are more or less vegetarians, though not very strict.

Before coming to the United States, very seldom did I taste any canned fruit or vegetables. There is no such industry as canning in India. The last war showed its possibilities, but the prices of canned goods are so high that they are placed beyond the reach of persons with limited

means. We have plenty of cocoanuts, dates, peaches, palms, bananas, pears, mangoes, *jāms*, watermelons, papayas, grapes, and apples, and many varieties of berries, melons; and nuts which can be preserved and used during seasons of scarcity (failure of crops).

Dadhi, or a preparation of sweetened or unsweetened sour milk (either thin or thick) is used by most of the Hindus. It is a very healthful food on account of the presence of lactic acid.

No meat fat is used by the Hindus in their cooking. On account of the adulteration of ghee with meat fat in recent years special laws have been passed to stop the practice. Meat fat is considered in the same light as meat itself. I never saw any animal fat except twice—first, when I saw a tiger skinned after it had been killed by hunters and, second, when my father bought a can to prepare some medicine. Besides the three kinds of oil already mentioned, there are at least half a dozen

more varieties of oil made of vegetable seeds.

When I was a boy of about nine years, Lord Curzon became Viceroy and Governor-General of India. He was a great friend of the English tea-planters. With their help he devised a plan of popularizing the habit of tea-drinking among the people. Prizes were offered to buyers of tea; clean but cheap tea-shops were opened at street corners; tea-vendors with a burning coal-stove and a boiling tea-kettle went around the streets selling tea in earthenware cups to poor people. Even villages were invaded by tea-salesmen. The result was very satisfactory from the tea-planters' point of view. Within a comparatively short period, tea became one of the popular drinks. Whether in summer or in winter, the Indian Tea Supply Corporation advises people to drink tea, for it quenches thirst in summer and gives warmth in winter. Tea has made a triumphant progress through-

out the length and breadth of India in the course of the last twenty years. In many city homes one will notice to-day men, women, and children waiting for their early morning cup. There are some who drink it in the afternoon and evening, but not with their principal meals. Coffee is drunk more in southern India. In many wayside railroad stations, when trains stop tea-sellers hawk their tea by crying aloud, "Garam Chā," "Chā Garam."

Several years before Lord Curzon's arrival in India, my father introduced the drinking of tea in our home in the morning. At first we did not have a sufficient number of cups to go round. So for the first few days we used to take turns in drinking from cups while the rest managed with glasses.

Next to the United States, India is the country which produces the largest amount of tobacco every year. Though I never smoked in my life, I watched many

of our people smoking their water pipes (*hookās*). My uncle was a great smoker and had different styles of water pipes which he used on different occasions. The most common and the cheapest hooka is made out of a dried and polished cocoanut shell, through the upper part of which a cocoanut shell is passed. A hole is bored on the side at the spot occupied by the eyes. A small funnel-shaped earthen pot (*kalké*) is placed at the top of the tube where tobacco is deposited on a few pieces of charcoal or a small coal cake (*tiké*). The inside of the shell is filled with water. A little fire applied to the charcoal or tike starts the smoking apparatus. Sometimes it is placed on brass or electro-plated stands. A long tube or a short pipe is attached to the hole on the side, and one can smoke either sitting straight or lying down in a reclining position. The smoke passes through the water and leaves the poisonous part of tobacco there. The tobacco is used after being made into a dark

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paste prepared with scents, spices, and molasses. The Mohammedans excel in the art of making tobacco. The Mohammedans of India are not Turks, for whom they are mistaken by many in the West. Besides the smoking and chewing of tobacco and taking snuff, the habit of chewing *pān* (betel) leaves rolled with a little lime, catechu, a few bits of cinnamon, betel nuts, cardamum, cloves, etc., is very prevalent. It reddens the tongue and the teeth for the time being.



A PROCESSION ON THE WAY TO THE MANDIR AT GIRIDIH.

In the center are the two daughters of Keshub Chunder Sen, one of whom, Maharani

CHAPTER XIII

HINDU FESTIVALS

THE chief Hindu festival of the year (in Bengal) is known as the Durgā Pujā or Durgotsav. The great goddess Durgā, with her arms extended riding on a lion, killing an Asura (demon) with a spear, and surrounded by her whole family, visits the Hindu home every October in order to receive the worship of her devotees. The festival is known by different names in other parts of India, but the worship is conducted with more pomp and solemnity in Bengal than in any other part of India. The Pujā season is marked by great rejoicing. The Hindus refer to the occasion as the coming of the mother. Two weeks before the festival, beggars and singers go around chanting the Agamani (or coming in advance) hymns. These hymns are all

marked by a human touch which appeals immediately to the listeners. It is hard for anybody born and brought up in Bengal to resist their appeal.

People dress in their best clothing and meet their friends with the utmost cordiality. Members of the same family living in different parts of the country come together under the old family roof and hold their annual reunions. The goddess Durgā is said to have been worshipped by the epic-hero Sri Rāmachandra before and after his successful expedition against Rāvana—the ten-headed demon king of Lankā (Ceylon).¹

The worship of Durgā is continued for four days at the end of which the image is thrown into the river or the village tank. In some homes the building of the image begins at least a month before the date specified in the almanac, if not earlier.

¹ A good translation of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata by Romesh Dutt (in the Everyman's Library) will be very interesting reading.

The image is made out of clay and different kinds of paints, and numerous tinsels made of zinc, lead, or tin.

Children enjoy the festival most, not only because they have, on that occasion, new clothes to wear and good food to eat, but because they can buy toys and receive presents from others, too. Theatres, concerts, professional dancing and singing form parts of the program. The Durgā Pujā, like the Christmas season of the West, is the festival for rich and poor, high and low, learned and illiterate.

The last day when the image is thrown into the river Ganges (or into some tank, if the Ganges is not near) is the day of universal rejoicing and reunion. People greet each other; embrace each other. The younger ones "take the dust" of the elders' feet as a mark of respect for age and relationship. Everybody is supposed to eat something sweet ("sweetening his mouth," as it is called) and to drink a small glassful of *siddhi* or *bhāṅg* (a kind

of narcotic called Indian hemp). Many past enmities are forgiven and forgotten on this occasion. Like the Christmas season, peace and good-will reign.

Animals (goats and a few buffaloes) are sacrificed before the image of the goddess in some houses. But there are homes where vegetables and fruits have been substituted for the animal sacrifices.

How different this festival is from the Christmas of the Western World! But I am sure children enjoy it as much as the children of Europe and America enjoy their Christmas, and perhaps more. Under English rule, the Christmas season is being recognized as a holiday season in India. Who does not like a holiday?—a vacation? So Christmas is hailed with great delight in India as the *baradin* (or great day), although not so much for its religious significance as for its great social value. Large cities like Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, and Rangoon, celebrate Christmas in their own ways. The

European as well as parts of the Indian sections are decorated and Christmas cakes and buns are displayed in the windows of the bakeries and confectioneries.

CHAPTER XIV

INDIAN VILLAGES

AN Indian village with a number of thatched and a few tiled cottages of larger size has some associations which I shall never forget. I knew one of the residents of the village—a good Brahmin who lived, worked, and died for the improvement of the village. The nearest railroad station is at a distance of about six or seven miles. The village is without any plans. Most of the people are poor. They plough their own fields, raise a few cattle for dairy purposes, and sell some of the vegetables and fruits. The majority of the villagers are Hindus. There are a few Moham-medans. There may be a few weavers, potters, housebuilders, and other such workers. Besides these, very few trades could be found in the village which I have in mind. There is a village doctor who

dispenses medicine and treats diseases. How far he is qualified for the work I do not know.

When I first came to know of this village of S——, I paid several visits to that place in company with some of my friends. The streets, lanes, and byways are uneven and poorly laid out. The people are very simple and very hard-working. They use simple implements for ploughing, winnowing, and husking the grains. No complicated machinery is used. In the cottages one will find the oil lamp burning at night. That type of open earthenware lamp has been burning in many hamlets in every part of India all through successive centuries, notwithstanding the rise and fall of empires, or changes of government. The Indian *pradip*, *langal* (plough), and *dhenki* (husking-machine) and the spinning-wheel are the symbols of the Indian villagers' love for the past.

The use of the most simple plough by the farmers, who employ a team of oxen

to drive the plough, accounts for the long hours of labor from the early hours of the morning to sunset. Horses are nowhere used in India for farming. Deep ploughing is not necessary in many parts of northern India. Therefore, the simple implements, primitive though they are, are serviceable.

“The Bengal plough is very much the same as the Greek and Roman one, though it has not the mechanical adjustments of its English namesake. The wooden coulter is shod with iron, which serves the purpose of the ‘shining stove.’ The plough-tail which is inclined to the ploughshare at an acute angle, is furnished with a short handle, by means of which the peasant guides the share and presses it into the earth. At the point of the share and tail is a hole through which passes a beam, to the end of which is attached the yoke. When the machine is set a-going, it is kept tight by ropes attaching the yoke to the plough-tail.”¹

There are two or three houses of Brah-

¹ Lee Behari Day—*Bengal Peasant Life*, 18-19.

mins in the village. The people count the number of houses belonging to different caste groups. Besides the Brahmins there are other castes like the Kāyasthas (clerks), Chūsi (farmers), Goālas or Gop (milkmen), Tili (oilmen), Béné (merchants), and Tānti (weavers). In certain villages the members of different castes live in different districts just as the Italians, the Greeks, the Chinese, and others live in different sections of American cities. Brahmin pāṛā, or the row of the Brahmins, Telipāṛā, Kāyasthapāṛā, etc., are such sections. Members of the same caste like to live in the same neighborhood because the sense of community unites and keeps them together.

Some villages have their temples and others have shrines at the base of a tree or on a street corner. The village of S—— has no temple. There are several ponds and tanks. The majority of these are so full of dirt and decayed matter that their water cannot be used for drinking.

After many attempts to keep at least one of them clean so that the water may be fit for drinking, my friend told me that he succeeded in impressing on the residents that the health of the village depended on their taking care of at least one tank. The trouble begins when men, women, and children bathe in the same tank from which they draw their drinking-water. The river Ganges is at a distance of about ten miles from the village; carrying drinking-water from the river is out of the question.

In some Indian villages rules have been made to keep the tanks free from dirt and decayed matter. There must be no bathing and washing of clothes and dishes in the tanks. Men, women, and children come to the bathing tank. They bathe, swim, and splash water on each other. In some villages there are two bathing-steps—one for the men and the other for women, while in others there are deep wells in the houses of well-to-do people. In the absence of any well-organized

women's clubs, the bathing-steps of tanks serve the purpose. Women meet their friends there and talk to their hearts' content.

The village of S—— has a small school. The schoolmaster is looked upon with great respect. He helps the villagers in building new roads, keeping the paths and tanks clear of rubbish and dry leaves. He also acts as the village scribe. The post-office is at a distance of seven miles. So the villagers do not receive any mail except once or twice a week. If any one wants to receive higher education in a high school, he will have to walk a distance of about twelve miles every day to go to the nearest school.

Life is very simple in the villages. People who live in thatched houses made of bamboo, straw, and mud sometimes suffer terribly during the rainy season. As a rule, most of the cottages are built on a level higher than the street. The characteristics of cottage building are reflected

in the temples and the mosques of Bengal. They have a curved roof, and pointed eaves built upon a bamboo stretcher, which gives them strength and helps them in throwing off rain; in fact, the housetops resemble the domes of temples with the shape of a lotus-bulb. The lotus-bulb-shaped tops and horseshoe arches inside the cottages are very distinctive of Indian architecture. The lotus flower and leaf are so prominent everywhere in tanks and temples that their forms have been worked into the warp and woof of Indian life.

As a rule, villages are very dark at night. Streets are not lighted. The rich growth of trees and shrubs makes the atmosphere all the more dark. To relieve the impenetrable darkness of certain quarters, the glowworms are the only source of light. There are open fields like the rice-fields and long stretches of uncultivated land. The different portions of land belonging to a number of owners are marked by low partitions called *al*. Sometimes

one can walk across the field through the *āls*.

Most of the cottages in our part of India are scrupulously clean. Only those who have been reduced to poverty through continued sickness, litigation, or some other untoward event, show any trace of uncleanness. The farmer, notwithstanding his lack of resources and scientific knowledge of agriculture, is a sober man and wants to work hard in order to support his family. He is practically the owner of the land, though the right of proprietorship belongs to the *zamidār* (or landowner). He holds the land on condition of paying a rent every year. As long as he pays the rent he cannot be evicted from his land. The *zamidār* is responsible to the government for the payment of the revenue. In certain parts of India the government acts as the landlord. Consequently there is no middleman between the government and the tenant. When the farmer fails to pay his rent, his

portion is sold to the highest bidder at a public auction.

The locations in a village are marked by different names. No street or lane has any name given to it, as in cities. But they are designated by certain objects or the presence of a certain class of people in the neighborhood, as, for example, *Goālā Pārā* (the street where Hari Mukhejee's house stands), *Shitalatolā* (the place where the shrine of the smallpox goddess *Shitala* stands), *Bandā Battolā* (or cemented fig-tree's foot), *Barwaritolā* (a common meeting-place of the village), *Panchanontolā* (the place of the god *Panchanan*), and *Shareshwartolā* (the place of the lord of the bull).

The farmers raise two crops during the year. The *aus dhān* (or the spring rice) and the *āman dhān* (or the winter crop of rice) are well-known names in Bengal. The former takes less time in ripening while the latter is the principal crop. Failure of rain in the summer months ac-

counts for scarcity of *āman dhān* and may lead to famines. There is a ceremony observed in Hindu homes which corresponds to the American Thanksgiving. It is called *Navānna*, or New Rice, and comes in the month of *Agrahāyan* (November). A more elaborate feast of cakes and puddings, however, is arranged during the next month. Children look forward to the latter, for so many varieties of cakes are prepared on the occasion that they last a week.

During festivals the villagers meet at the *Barwaritolā*, where they may witness a *jātrā* (village theatre) performance presented by a group of players who act under a canopy (without any stage setting) either in an open place or a thatched auditorium. The *jātrās* have for their subjects stories of old Indian heroes (especially from the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata*). The players also produce some farces and problem plays (of recent origin). Music is an essential part of the

jātrās. Indian dramatic art in its original form can be studied in the folk dramas and folk songs which the *jātrās* present. As in the case of English drama during the days of Shakespeare, no woman takes part in the *jātrās*. Many were the afternoons and evenings that I spent during my boyhood watching the performances and following their stories. At present we have public theatres in large cities where professional actors and actresses take part in plays written by some of our very eminent playwrights. But these modern plays produced in imitation of the Western theatres have not been able to attract my attention. At present many villages have their concert and theatre clubs.

CHAPTER XV

INDIAN CITIES

DURING my grandmother's young days there were not more than one hundred miles of railroad in India. To-day India has about thirty thousand miles of railroad. All these railroads have been built, for the most part, by Indian labor. Seventy or eighty years ago, people traveled by means of *pālkis* (palanquins), *dulis* (stretchers or litters), boats, and carriages drawn by bulls and horses. The country is studded with temples, shrines and sacred spots of various description. On account of great distances between one's city or village and the temple city or place of pilgrimage, those who undertook the journey had to travel either by boat or by walking through caravan routes. Many used to get sick and die on their way.

Because of the unsettled condition of the country, resulting from the break-up of the Mohammedan empire, and the wrangling for supremacy among the European powers (notably the English and the French), robbers, thieves, and murderers roamed about boldly. Many pilgrims lost their lives at the hands of these desperadoes. Consequently those who wanted to visit the pilgrim centers went there almost at the last part of their lives. They would go prepared to die, for who would not like to die near the house or the city of God? Pilgrimages, therefore, were risky undertakings. In those days, pilgrims would take their last farewell of their friends and relations, and draw up their wills before setting out on a pilgrimage.

Conditions have greatly changed since my grandmother's time; they are now changing more rapidly than they did in my father's day. People now visit the places of pilgrimages in thousands and tens of thousands. Centers such as Be-

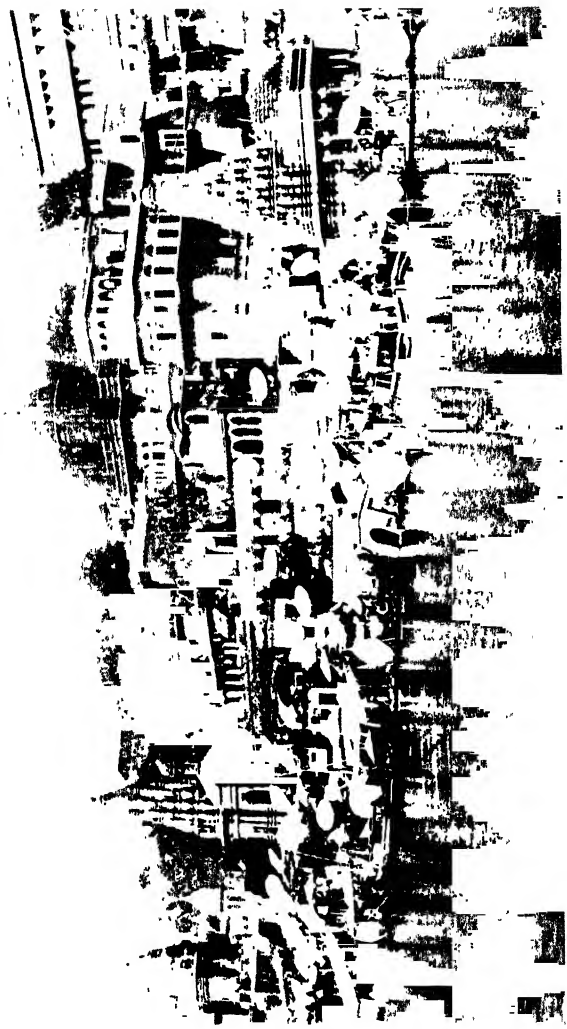
nares, Puri, Allahabad, and Muttra are Meccas for several million pilgrims every year. Monks and laymen flock here from all parts of India. Benares is the most sacred spot in all India. It is the Jerusalem of the Hindus. Like Rome, all roads in India lead to Benares. People who live there in the hope of dying on the banks of the Ganges and having their ashes thrown into the river, believe that by so doing they will at death go straight to heaven like Elijah of the Old Testament.

The city with its numerous temples, *ghāts* (bathing-stairs) and winding streets paved with stone shows clearly that there is something out of the ordinary in its atmosphere. Marigold, red hibiscus, the *vakul* (or *Mimuspos Elengi*), the lotus, and green leaves, are to be found at every approach to a temple or a *ghāt*. There are several *chatras*, or public kitchens, and dining-halls, maintained by Hindu princes and landholders (*zamidars*). Travelers,

students, and monks get their meals free at those places. Hindu society in its best days aimed at keeping intellectual and religious leaders above all want. The *chatras* are remnants of that attitude of the Hindus. The Dharmashalas provide rooms for lodging either on payment of a small fee or altogether free. Those are the nearest approaches to Western hotels and inns.

The temple of Visweswar (the lord of the universe)—a representation of Shiva and the Manikarnika ghat are always crowded. In the evening, the former attracts a large crowd of devoted worshippers who attend the *ārati* or the worship of the lighted lamp. Flowers are offered and incense galore is burned in the course of the service. The sight of the devoted group of worshippers making their obeisance to the god as a mark of respect is always worth watching.

Benares, it is said, has as many good men as bad ones. And that is character-



BENARES AND THE GANGES RIVER.

istic of the twentieth century as pointed out by C. M. Sheldon in his book for boys, "The Twentieth Door." Any modern city can make a similar claim. One of my American Christian Missionary friends always attached the adjective "wicked" before the names of such Indian cities as Calcutta, Howrah, and Benares. They are no more wicked than similar cities in other parts of the world. Because people from every part of India come and stop there for a short period, a class of people take advantage of the simplicity and ignorance of the visitors. Besides the innumerable specimens of *sādhus*, and *sanyāsis* who are to be seen at the ghats and approaches to all temples, there is a class of men called *pāndās* who have made Benares famous. They are the priests' agents and guides. Just as when one arrives at a railroad station in any city of Europe and America, he is accosted by a hotel agent; similarly in Benares and other pilgrim centers of India one meets

the *pāndās* who act as guides. They go straight to a man, ask his name, and claim him as one of his clients whose ancestors when they visited Benares either availed themselves of the help of that panda or his predecessor in business. They carry a written record with them by means of which they seek to establish the genuineness of their claims. I know their overtures are very annoying, at times, just as are the overtures of many so-called guides and agents who stand at the street corners of Paris, Marseilles, Naples, and other European cities.

Benares

In the outskirts of Benares, in a place called Sārnath, I watched for a long time the extensive ruins of ancient buildings. In the neighborhood was the famous deer park of the days of the great Indian teacher, Gautama Buddha. There he lived and taught. The place where he preached his first sermon is still marked

by a *stupa* (mound). The columns of the famous King Asoka, the beloved of the gods, still stands near the garden. A museum has been built close by. Many old statues, monuments, inscriptions, and works of art have been placed in that building. A fit place of pilgrimage for people from every part of the world! I have seen Chinese and Japanese pilgrims there.

A story is told of King Asoka's young days. Before he decided to follow the way of life of the great master, Buddha, he had been living a life of pleasure and thoughtlessness. In one of his freakish moments, he conceived the idea of establishing a hell on earth in his own city. He ordered a house of stone with iron gates to be built as soon as possible. Over the door he had a line inscribed thus: "He who enters this house shall not get out of it."

Inside the building he had several ovens made. Big kettles and pans filled

with oil were placed on the ovens. Any one who by curiosity or mistake entered the building was seized, thrown into the boiling pots, and scalded and burned alive. One day the king thought that he would visit the place and see with his own eyes whether his orders were being carried out properly. The king was perfectly satisfied with all the arrangements made for conducting his earth-made hell. When he was about to depart from the building at the close of his inspection, a yellow-robed monk came in. The king was surprised at the audacity of the monk. He asked him whether he had noticed the inscription over the doorway. The monk wanted to know what it was. Thereupon the king commanded the keeper of the hell to arrest the monk and throw him into one of the boiling pots. When the monk was told the reason, he turned immediately to the king and said without any hesitation, "Now, your Majesty, how dare you get out of the building? You have made the

law and can you yourself violate it?" He added further, "I am willing to be boiled alive in obedience to the law made by you, because death has no terrors for me, but I shall not allow myself to be arrested and boiled alive in your hell unless you accompany me and uphold your law."

The king was so shamed by the monk's bold statement that he ordered the immediate closing of the place and turned a disciple of the yellow-robed monk. Such is the story of the conversion of the great King Asoka of India, the Constantine of Buddhism.

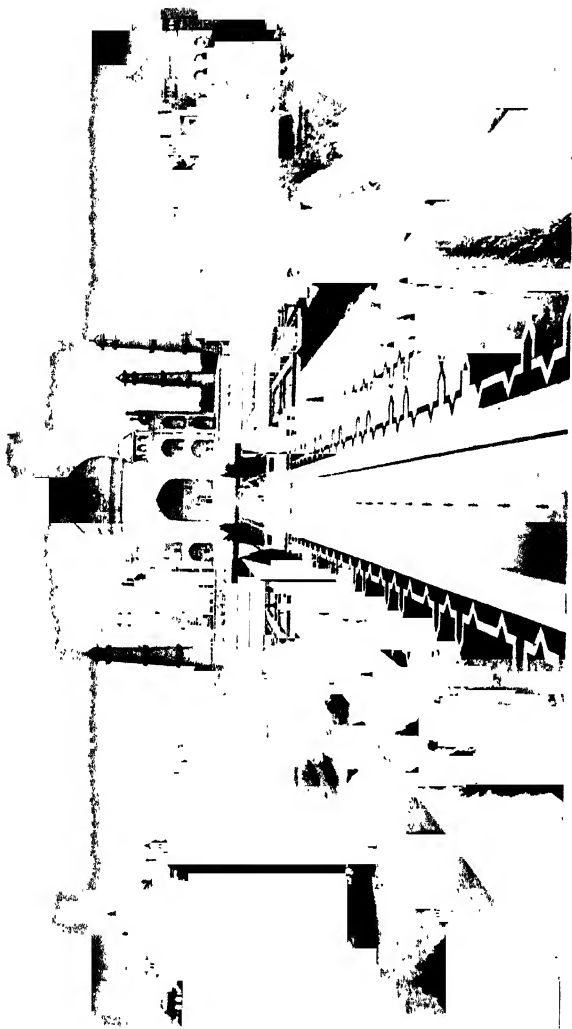
Benares is also famous for its silk. The beautiful cloth of gold and silver which is known all over India as "Benarosi" silk *sāri* (woman's cloth), is made here on hand-loom in the open air under the trees. "Very beautiful it is to see the long lines of crimson, saffron, or purple, vibrating with iridescent tints in the checkered light of sun and shade, and the men and women passing up and down twirling the spindles

from which the gossamer-like thread is unwound." The Hindu bride is usually dressed in this style of silk *sāri*—made in Benares.

Agra

When Arjumand Bānu Begum, the beloved wife of Emperor Shah Jahan of Delhi, died in 1631, the emperor was so overwhelmed with grief that for weeks and months he did not attend to his state duties. Mumtaz Mahal, the charm of the palace, occupied his thoughts so much that the emperor resolved to create a memorial for his wife which would speak for itself for ages to come.

The beautiful mausoleum which stands at Agrā, in the heart of India, is known as the Tāj Mahāl. I like to describe it as "Love's Last Laurel." When the empress was lying on her death-bed she called to her side the Emperor of India, placed her hand on the head of Shan Jahan and made him promise that he would erect a



THE TAJ MAHAL.

memorial to her that would surpass all others.

The emperor kept his promise. He called all the best architects of the land, asked them to submit plans for a most beautiful building, that would stand on the banks of the Jumnā and remind him of his lost, but not forgotten, wife. A story is told that when he was about to select the master-builder he ordered the candidates to meet one day in his garden in front of a large tank. There he sat on his throne. He had his servants bring loads of jewels, rubies, jade, silver, and gold. He put them in bags and then started throwing the bags into the tank. Everybody was stupefied, as they were entirely in the dark about the emperor's plan. At last some of the candidates could not hold their tongues any longer. They cried out in amazement, "What are you doing, oh, great emperor? Won't you please stop wasting all those valuable jewels?" The emperor asked those men

to withdraw altogether, for he told them plainly that they would not be able to resist the temptation of gold, pearls, and jewels. They were not fit persons to be the builders of a great memorial because they were so worried about a little loss of wealth.

The tenets of Islam (the religion of Mahomet, the prophet of Arabia) do not encourage portrait-painting. They are extremely Puritanical in their attitude regarding the representation of human beings. Consequently there arose the strong desire on the part of the Mohammedans to create substitutes for pictures in the shape of mosques, memorials, and buildings. The city of Agrā is full of such pictures in stone. This city was the creation of the best period in Mohammedan art in India.

Agra has become famous for its Tāj, which draws pilgrims from the four corners of the earth. It took about seventeen years to complete the building. About

twenty thousand men worked in the construction of it. The master-builder was Ustad Isa, but there were others from every part of India, Persia, Arabia, and Turkey who helped him. Stones, pearls, and jewels were brought from all parts of the then known world. "The Charm of the Palace" rests under the dome of the Tāj.

Approaching from the west, the visitor enters the quadrangle in front of a gateway surrounded by arcades. There is a *dharamshālā*, or *serāi*, where travelers can stop and poor people can have food and shelter. An exquisitely beautiful building of white marble with a milk-white dome in the center is the main section, which stands inside a garden, following the old Tartar custom. The flowers and flowering shrubs stand as the symbol of life, while the solemnity created by the presence of the somber cypress reminds one of death. Here life and death meet in creating a new poem of love—a new picture more living

than a painter's picture could have ever been.

The four minarets at the four corners appear like "four tall court attendants attending the princess." The building in outline is partly mirrored in a wide canal located at the end of a long court. The walls of the building are all covered with beautifully colored mosaic made by the in-setting of exactly cut and splendidly matched pieces of stones,—such as jade, onyx, agate, etc. The pavement is of white and black marble. Most of the walls are inlaid with the Islamic sacred texts from the Koran. The inscription over the principal arch of the entrance runs thus: "Only those who are pure in heart can enter the gardens of Heaven."

The emperor and the empress lie in coffins of gold in a vault in the central chamber. A screen of marble tracery which surrounds the tombs is a wonderful piece of workmanship. The building with all its surroundings breathes a spirit of

simplicity. One can have a very good view of the Tāj, the Fort, and the river Jumnā if one stands on the platform of the red sandstone mosque known as the Jammat Khānā which is close by.

I know people who have visited the Tāj day after day and night after night. They love to muse on moonlit nights under the shades of the building and enjoy this creation of beauty—"a joy forever." Such is Tāj Mahāl—"Love's Last Laurel," or "India's noble tribute to the grace of Indian womanhood, the Venus de Milo of the East."

CHAPTER XVI

MY TRIP TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

I ALWAYS had a great desire to study and travel abroad. When I was about seven years old one of my cousins went to England to study at Oxford. The day before the boat sailed from the port of Calcutta, my father took me to the wharf to say good-bye to my cousin. I remember that day very vividly. It was a great event in my young life. I went on board the British India Steam Navigation Company's boat. The atmosphere was so new that I felt puzzled. However, from that day, my mother tells me, I began saving all my coppers (*paishas*), so that some day I might visit England. That was the beginning of a dream.

I do not remember how long I con-

tinued saving the pennies. My mother, as well as I, knew full well that I was not a very steady saver of money. I had a peculiar weakness for all kinds of pens, pencils, paper, inks, erasers, and pictures, and whenever I had a few pennies I would run to the nearest stationery store and buy everything that my savings could pay for. How I was scolded by my mother in those days for squandering money!

As years went by I went through school and two years of college. At the end of my college work I decided to devote myself to the social, religious, and educational work in connection with the progressive, socio-religious movement of which my father had been a much-respected member. The experiences through which I had to go during a period of eight years between my leaving college and coming to the United States of America were varied. I lived and worked in different parts of my home town, Calcutta, as well as outside. I worked among

the poorest children of the city and the country districts. But I had also opportunities to work among the children of the rich and the middle classes. I slept many a night under the open sky near jungles and wooded hills. I also slept under the roof of a peasant's hut and a prince's palace. In the midst of those changing experiences I always felt the call of the larger world. I felt more and more that some day I should visit the United States.

Several of my friends had come to the States for study and travel. When my turn came at last, the world was passing through the most critical period of the World War. Many predicted my sure death on account of the submarine warfare which was the cause of the sinking of several vessels and loss of many lives every day.

I was selected by a committee of representative Indians of Calcutta (Rabindranath Tagore, the great Indian poet being one of the members of the committee)



RABINDRANATH TAGORE.

Noted author. Winner of Nobel Prize in Literature, 1913. Founder of Shantiniketan School for Boys and International University. Held in reverence by the Author of this book, who knows him well

to study for two years in one of the theological schools in Pennsylvania. Notwithstanding the protests of many friends whose solicitude for my safety was unquestionable, I sailed from Bombay, having crossed the country by train from Calcutta—a journey of about forty-two hours. On my way to the United States I stopped in England for about a week. Those were the days of Zeppelin raids over London. There was despair in every face. I tried to secure a passage by the first available boat for the United States. I sailed from Liverpool on an American liner. After a week's voyage across the Atlantic, during which time we were leaving the Old World farther behind every day, we came in sight of land on a Saturday night. Our boat entered New York harbor the following morning. We sighted the great Statue of Liberty early in the morning. I had seen pictures of the Statue before I came to the States, but they were not so real as the Statue it-

self. I felt assured that, after all, it was the United States of America. Sometimes dreams certainly come true.

THE END

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